

jeevadhabra

A JOURNAL OF CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION

Communities and Identity-Consciousness

Edited by

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Jeevadhabra

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Dominus Jesus **A Theological Response**

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RELIGION

NATIONALISM AND CULTURE

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A JOURNAL OF CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION

Value of Human Life and some Current Issues

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Editorial

We are assisting at two apparently divergent processes today: one is globalisation and homogenisation which seem to carry the day; the other is the assertion of identities and multi-culturalism which is gaining increasing importance all over the world. Nation-states have come to a crisis, as groups and communities within them claim their legitimate place. It is to this latter question of identities that the present number of *Jeevadhara* is devoted. An earlier number was devoted to the question of globalisation and peripheralisation.

In his study of the phenomenon of nationalism, Benedict Anderson spoke of "*imagined communities*". In identity-formation and community-consciousness, there is an element of imagination, creation and construction. That it does not follow community-consciousness is not true. But, whether true or false, what is undeniable, however, is that the self-perception of a group of people is inevitably a *relational reality*. For identity-formation is not an abstract process, but something taking place in relation to the "other" or "others" around one's group or community. This is true of ethnic, linguistic, religious, and regional groups.

All the articles in this number have the Indian context as their chief point of reference and they approach the question of identities from various angles, issues and historical sites. The first article by Champakalakshmi enlightens us as to how in pre-modern India the self-perception of castes and communities as well as their inter-relationships had the temple and its functioning as the common point of reference. Janaki Nair explores the more recent process in Kannada identity-formation as well as that of the city of Bangalore with its many linguistic groups. The contribution by Jose Maliekal adopts a subaltern perspective and enquires into the pathetic situation of a depressed group of Andhra, called the Madigas. He shows how their encounter with Catholicism shaped their self-image and promoted their struggle for the formation of their identity. Anata Giri argues that there are limits to

identity politics. For, the re-thinking and reconstruction of our identities requires a self-critical approach that does not “debilitate our capacity to learn”. Such an approach will help us to transcend essentialisation of identities and overcome any constriction of freedom and choice. Finally, identity-politics needs to be moulded from a spiritual perspective that will help us to identify ourselves with the suffering of the other.

The last three articles are focused on the Indian Christian community and its identity-consciousness. Xavier Arulraj & Anthony Sebastian argue that the minority rights granted to Christians as a religious community should not be limited to institutional benefits, but should be viewed chiefly as protection granted to the *weaker sections*. Lucien Legrand finds Jesus as the “God of small things” as revealed in his attitude, ministry and options. For him, salvation is not connected with numerical strength; rather it is an experience of “discovering the power of God’s love in the least glorious aspects of human existence”. Paul followed a strategy of implanting communities of disciples on a representative basis in different cities and centres. He did not go to every place, and yet he thought that the Gospel was preached everywhere because it was represented everywhere. The last article by the editor of the issue presents some trajectories for strengthening and deepening the relationship of Christian community with other communities in evolving new socio-political context. It concludes saying that it is the nature and quality of the relationship of Christians with other communities which will decide whether we are Indian or alien.

I wish to thank all the contributors for the efforts they made to study and research into the complex problem of “Communities and Identity-Formation”. The issue is a serious one and studies on it is expanding day by day. What is presented here is but some glimpses of a problematic that will be a hot, vibrant and exciting point of exploration for some years to come.

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Felix Wilfred

Caste and Community in Pre-Modern South India

R. Champakalakshmi

This is a shortened version of a contribution by the author, formerly professor of History in the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. This essay focussing on the pattern of oscillation between caste and community as identity providers bases itself on the temple inscriptions and textual traditions as historical sources. It locates the question at two historical sites: Pre-Vijayanagara period and Vijayanagara period. The author shows how the former period is marked by the mention of Valankai and Itankai division of occupational groupings in temple inscriptions, but absent in Sanskrit textual traditions; and by the absence of caste and community in temple inscriptions, but not in the textual traditions. This essay further persuasively argues that both caste and community (such as Tamil Saivas, Sri Vaishnavas and Vira Saivas) were major categories both in inscriptions and textual traditions as markers of identity and organising principle in the Vijayanagara period.

In pre-modern South India, one perceives an interesting pattern of oscillation between caste and community in creating, establishing and claiming an identity. The oscillation between caste and community as identity markers in pre-modern South India is based on the fact that there is a marked difference in the ways in which inscriptions and textual traditions till the Vijayanagara period present South Indian society. In Pre-Vijayanagara inscriptions, neither caste nor community, with the exception of the Brahmins and some sectarian groups, is emphasised as a determinant in people's relationships with the temple, the arena in which such identities were built up. On the contrary, in the Vijayanagara period, these two became major categories both in inscriptional records and textual traditions as markers of identity and organising principles in society and polity.

Depiction of Caste and Sectarian groups in Temple Inscriptions

Inscriptions from the 7th to 13th centuries in the Saiva and Vaishnava temples follow a particular format in which the donors (with the exceptions of Brahmins and royalty), are mentioned by their names, pre-fixed by the place name, family (*kudi*) name and personal name, with hardly any indication of their caste and ritual status. The only means of determining such identities is through suffixes like *Bhatta* (Brahmin), *Velan* (agriculturist), *Kon* (cowherd) and so on. The service groups were referred to by the general term *devakanmigal*, *tailpparivaram* etc., and the occupational names like *Kaikkola* (weaver), *manradi* (cowherd) etc. Donors or suppliers of items of ritual requirements (food, dress and ornaments) of the deity also find a place in temple inscriptions. There is also mention of *brahmana sabha*, *mulaparishad*, committees for specific functions. Almost all inscriptions end with a stylised or formulaic conclusion referring to a sectarian group or local community as entrusted with the protection of all these endowments and their maintenance. Here we have the first glimpse of organised local sectarian groups or communities of *Mahesvaras* (*Pan Mahesvaras*) and Sri Vaishnavas. Such innumerable local communities together formed the larger society dominated by the super-ordinate institutional organisation of the temple. They had enormous power over temple administration and the *sabhas* of the *brahmadeyas*. These sectarian groups represented a community of devotees which included the Brahmins, Velalas and others and various sub-sects of Saivas and Srivaishnavas.

In the copper plate records, which invariably register grants to Brahmins, references to the *varna* order are common, though mainly in the *prasasti* or eulogy of the king, who is given or who claims Kshatriya status and descent from a great warrior lineage, and is often described as the protector of *varnasrama dharma*. Also the Brahmins of various Vedic *sakhas*, *gotras* are clearly visible in the Brahmin settlements as Vedic scholars (*chaturvedin*) and *donees* with special privileges and are assigned the highest rank in society. The terms *Vaisya* and *Sudra* are conspicuously absent, the others being referred to by their occupational and ethnic associations, some of which go back to the early Christian era.

In marked contrast, the Vijayanagara inscriptions recognise the caste and ritual status of the different groups in temple service, as donors, functionaries or suppliers of ritual items. For example, the *traivarinka* (*Vaisya*) status of the Chettis is a common occurrence in the temple

inscriptions. The institution of feeding houses (*Ramanuja kutam*, for example) where both the Brahmins and Sudras are fed out of temple endowments is recorded in some Vaishnava centres, Sudras now (16th century) being specially included, apart from *paradesis*. The *sattada* Srivaishnavas (non-Brahmins given ritual functions in the temple) figure in considerable numbers in temple rituals and other functions. Interestingly, instead of religious groups like the Panmahesvaras and Srivaishnavas, administrators, i.e., *sthanikas* and *sthanattar* were entrusted with the protection of endowments. Also significant are the references to families of *acharya purushas* or preceptors and cult leaders, who now act as the channel of royal endowments as well as private ones, for ritual and other purposes, redistributive functions and also construction and elaboration of the temple structures, a function earlier discharged by local institutions and sectarian groups. In the earlier inscriptions, this pattern of cult leadership and domination of temple affairs by particular figures is not reflected. It has been suggested, on the basis of epigraphic evidence (from Srirangam), that it was the individual identity that was significant for the devotee, for his connection with the temple was "direct and personally forged, rather than being mediated through his membership in a particular caste or family". Later it is argued that this changed to one marked by the acquisition of exclusive perquisites, honours and service rights from the Vijayanagara period, when religious communities are conspicuously visible in temple inscriptions.

Contrary views based on textual traditions point out the tensions in Srivaishnava centres like Srirangam, between the egalitarian spirit of bhakti and a Brahmin orthodoxy predicated on strict observance of caste distinctions. It is also suggested that under the leadership of early *acharyas* and in response to the presence of powerful non-Brahmin local interests, Brahmin authorities may have succeeded in permitting participation of "Sudras" in administration and ritual life of the temple.

The horizontal segregation of different social groups around the temple as the nucleus, and the assignment of different *cheris* to the occupational groups in order of their importance to the temple ritual does point to a ritual ranking in temple society in each centre and by extension it can be seen as a common pattern of social organisation based on certain caste-cum-occupational considerations. One could see here the evolution of a regional structure of the brahminical social order with pre-dominant non-varna features, characterised by the Brahmin and non-Brahmin polarisation and the absence of Kshatriya and Vaisya varnas.

The Dual Division of Valankai and Itankai

It is a grouping of occupational groups/ethnic/caste groups into the Right and Left Hand divisions known from the Chola period, the root of which may be traced back to the “*sangam*” period. It is visible in inscriptive records from the 11th century AD, but hardly recognised in the Sanskrit textual tradition of the South. These two divisions are generally low in ritual status i.e., below the Brahmins and dominant land-owning or agricultural groups like the Velalas, Velamas and later Reddies, Kampulu, etc., but above the outcastes. These groups shared a common status and symbols in religious contexts i.e., in temple ritual and activities, when they were ranked as equals. They observed caste norms in their own localities but became transformed into Valankai or Itankai, i.e. altered, for joint action supporting religious institutions. In the early period of their existence, there is a consistent association of the Right hand with agricultural and related activities and of the Left Hand with artisanal, trading and allied activities (i.e. mercantile and occupational/professional crafts). These were the Panchala, Kammala and also Kaikkola (weavers). They also occasionally used the *Rathakara* designation, claiming a *Rathakara* status by which they were entitled to sacred thread investiture and access to other temple rituals.

It is significant that the two divisions appeared at a point of time, when, expansion of agricultural activities/people into new tracts or frontier zones (different eco-zones) like the forest and hilly regions or when people of those tracts are assimilated into the agrarian society (sedentary organisation). The diversification of economic activities brought into existence a variety of economic and occupational groups who had to be given space within the framework of the traditional norms of social organisation, helping potential alliances at the supra-local level. This happened clearly from the 12th century and intensified under the Vijayanagara, two periods of change in society and economy, due to intensive urbanisation, when the need for supra-local formation became particularly important. Some 12th century Chola inscriptions record agreements of “lower caste” people of the two divisions for resistance against the “Brahmins and Velalas who hold *Kani* rights over the lands of the region. Hence, they also seem to be supra local in character, “potential social formations which could be activated for a variety of purposes but not corporate or continuous in character.”

Though the constituents of the divisions are localised “caste” or occupational groups, there is no ranking or stratification within their respective divisions. Ranking, however, appears when the assimilation of

people previously outside the division into Itankai and their alliance with similar groups takes place. The groupings also became unpredictably heterogeneous and illogical as the criteria for the classification became variable. Calling it a “root paradigm”, an ethno-historian (A. Appadurai) pointed out the immense ‘temporal’ and ‘spatial’ variations and contexts in which it served to align lower and middling castes in situations of conflict in the colonial/modern period.

There was a striving for rank and mobility from left to Right and even to Vaisya and Brahmin status by the Itankai in the 19th century which led to the creation of several *Puranams* of their origin, in which Chola king figures either as the originator of the division or as a weakly integrated authority who fails to provide their demands for status. Here an attempt is made to give themselves a respectable origin by associating their beginnings with service to the Brahmins or their birth in *Agni Kunda*. Later they also attributed their origins to the gods themselves (Siva and Indra for the Left Hand and Brahma and Bhrigu for the Right Hand or to a disagreement between Siva and Parvati) who created them or by their actions brought the divisions into being. Usually the number of castes in both divisions is 98 each. Strange symbols and somatic marks are given to them: Garuda and Purushamirga to the Right hand and elephant eagle to the Left. They were made to appear from the Agni Kunda to protect the sacrifice of the Brahmins, carry the slippers and umbrella of the Brahmin sages on the left side when they alighted from the car in Kasyapa was being carried to the Chola ruler to his new *Brahmadeya* colony. *This shows how the people of lower crafts can construct their symbols of identity by creating new myths to raise their social status.*

Caste in the Textual Traditions

The textual sources of the same period (early medieval), especially the Bhakti hymns are dominated by the theme of protest against the Brahmins, showing an awareness of the varna organisation, taking an anti-varna stance. Yet, the protest is often restricted to orthodox Vedic Brahminism and its exclusivism in the Brahmin access to divine grace and salvation i.e. an elitism in the religious sphere. The struggle was between the Tamil hymnists and orthodox Vedic Brahmins (*Chaturvedins* of the *Brahmadeyas*) and Brahmin establishments controlling temple administration. This is particularly emphasised in later hagiographical texts of 12th-13th centuries. These Bhakti discourses demonstrate the rejection of the Chaturvedins (learned in the four Vedas) as their gurus by the hymnists, who were averse to accepting them as their teachers but would hold that the Velala (Sudra) saints of Bhakti

tradition as their teachers. Madurakavi, for example, called himself the disciple of Nammalvar, a Sudra saint. The status of the devotee is hailed as superior to that of a Brahmin, i.e., to be a Bhakta was more important than to be a Brahmin. In other words the community of Bhaktas was above caste. A direct rejection of caste is perhaps implied in some of the Saiva hymns (of Appar) and of Vaishnava hymns. Clearly the attitude of the hymnists was against the normative Sastric prescriptions of the hierarchical varna order. For the saint would even worship the 'leper with rotting limbs, the outcaste, even the foul Puliyan who skins and eats cows, even these men, if they are servants of Him who shelters the Ganges in his long hair'. The sense of a community evolving around a sectarian theistic cult comes through strongly in the Vaishnava and Saiva hymns, the image of the community superseding that of social hierarchy, through shared devotion (Bhakti). The *Puranic* and *Agamic* forms represented the core of the Bhakti cult as against the *Vedic-Smarta* forms. *Yajna* (sacrifice) is replaced by *dana* (gift) and the temple as the super-ordinate institution becomes the focus and symbol of the community.

Community

In the long process of the evolution of religious communities in South India, one can perceive a pattern in the ways in which these identities emerged through specific constructions of the past by leading sections of the people, their self perceptions and perceptions of the "other". In these complex process one can also recognise that there are "handed down memories", "patterned imagination" and also a certain common heritage. These processes also reflect constant tension between the mainstream – here Sanskrit – and the local/popular/vernacular, often called the "Great" and the "Little" traditions, a tension between Brahminical orthodoxy and egalitarian ideals. Different religious groups were also constantly appropriating cultural resources from a range of Brahminical, Jain and Buddhist sources for their own structures and symbols. The most significant among them in South India are the Vira Saivas (*Lingayats*), the Tamil Saivas and the Srivaishnavas.

In the evolution of communities four aspects need to be understood: one is the notion of tradition, textual, which is central to community consciousness and identity. Tradition is not immutable but often fluid and dynamic and hence subject to interpretations, re-interpretations and reconstruction by those who seek to control it. This is linked with access to various forms of power. So the second major concern is to show what kind of institutional structures were evolved in disseminating and controlling

tradition. The third aspect relates to the question of what kind of authority relationships emerged between political authority and how they were mediated. The fourth dimension deals with the question of what was their social base and which segment of the community was responsible for creating and perpetuating these identities.

Among the various historical contexts in which such developments took place, two periods stand out as markers of the visible consolidation of various communities as socio-religious categories, built around textual/canonical traditions and institutions, which evolved over centuries. The first was the 12th-13th centuries AD, representing a major structural change in society and economy due to increased diversification of crafts production and inter-regional trade. It was also the period in which the first hagiographical works in Tamil appeared for the followers of Saivism and new trends emerged in Sri Vaishnavism and the beginnings of the Vira Saiva movement in Karnataka for creating an alternative structure challenging the Brahminical social order. The second was the Vijayanagar and post-Vijayanagar period, when all community identities get consolidated through institutional structures and symbols, but at the same time get re-moulded within the Brahminical traditional structures.

The Tamil Saivas

The evolution of the Tamil Saiva community may be traced through three stages in the pre-Vijayanagara period, representing three different historical contexts. The first stage is marked by the composition of the *Tevaram* hymns by the Saiva Nayanmar (6th to 9th centuries) known for its central concept of Bhakti. There is a strong element of protest against the orthodox brahminical attitudes and caste hierarchy. The hymnists came from the upper echelons of society, the Saiva Brahmins, Velalas and even the rulers of the Chola royal family. Members of the lower castes are represented only in the hagiographical works of the 11th-12th centuries among the 63 Nayanmars.

The second stage is marked by the institution of ritual singing or *Patikam* singing (offering hymns in the worship) from the late 9th century, as a part of temple worship under royal patronage. It became a pre-eminent socio-religious activity of the temple under the Cholas. The ritual singers not only chanted or sang the hymns but also presumably interpreted them and handed them down as a text or scripture (Tamil *marai*) and hence they became sacred, having equal validity with the Vedas or the Sanskrit scriptures. The hymnists were creating not only a text but its context in the form of a sacred geography with which, significantly, the agrarian and political geography of

the Chola period coincided. They were in fact establishing or creating in many cases the sacred (bhakti) centres for the first time and making them known to the community at large and then recommending a visit. These places were identified with Siva himself and they represent a “regional” cultic geography, establishing a net work, uniting a people, who shared or inherited a common regional culture, a network that served political ends as well.

In the changing socio-political context at the end of the Pallava period (9th cent.) the institution of ritual singing served two purposes, 1. As a communication channel and 2. As one of the mechanisms of ideological consolidation for the emerging Chola state, the ideology itself being derived initially from the bhakti of both Saiva Nayanmar and Vaishnava Alvar, but with a shift to Saivism in 11th century. The next stage is marked by the consolidation, under royal patronage, of the Saiva community and Saivism vis-à-vis other religions and its ideological significance for Chola monarchy. In the royal temples the imaging of Siva in sculptures and paintings in appropriate niches and panels clearly convey a political imagery, thus becoming a visual and aesthetically more powerful text.

The hagiographical literature represents a particular construction of the past and was carried out in a context of change and societal crisis, causing conflicts in two arenas. One was the deepening rivalry between the Saivas and Vaishnavas, and the other was the aspiration of the Velala community for a greater share in the authority structure of the temple i.e. the control and redistribution of resources. This they sought to achieve through the organisation of the hymns and hagiography into a canonical tradition and creating a second institution viz., the *matha* or monastic organisation with Velala leaders as the custodians of the canon. Another group of non-conformists and unorganised ascetics known as the *Siddhas*, well-known for their radical and iconoclastic attitudes and anti-brahminical views also came to be integrated into the Tamil Saiva movement. This was achieved by the inclusion of a great *Siddha*, Tirumular, as one of the 63 Nayanmar of the *Periyapuranam* in the 12th century. The whole process culminated in the evolution of the Saiva Siddhanta canon in the 13th-14th centuries comprising of the bhakti hymns, hagiography and philosophical treatises.

The Sri Vaishnavas

In the evolution of the Sri Vaishnava community, textual tradition and institutions play an equally crucial role. The Sri Vaishnava textual corpus is highly complex and irreducible to any linear or thematic order. Though it did not play any ideological function for the Cholas (like Saiva tradition), it did become a major component in the larger ideological constructs of the

Vijayanagara period. In the Alvar hymns, we see a systematic development of bhakti, acquiring a centrality, transcending, initially at least, the Saiva-Vaishnava divide. The sense of community of devotees emerges strongly in the Vaishnava hymns too. The image of community supersedes that of social hierarchy based on caste, the bhaktas sharing love and devotion to Vishnu and his sacred shrines. The *adiyar* are important as a fraternity and the temple became the centre for the devotional cult. The idea of service (*kainkarya*) to the Lord and very significantly the service to the devotees of the Lord were also emphasised in the hymns. The element of protest (liminal point) is equally strong, yet it is more against the Chaturvedins, Vedic orthodoxy and exclusiveness of the Brahmins in their access to divine grace and salvation. The context of transmission of the Alvar hymns was also the temple, providing ritual and physical space.

In the 12th cent., which is marked by significant socio-economic changes, Ramanuja emerged as the central figure in the development of Vaishnava theology and philosophy. Ramanuja's *Visishtadvaita* drew inspirations from bhakti hymns of Alvars, emphasised the importance of the *Agamas* (the *Pancharatara* in particular) and based itself on the *Vedas* and *Upanishads* by interpreting them within the theistic framework. It harmonised God's transcendence (*paratva*) with accessibility (*saulabhyam*) and inculcated the highest type of devotion without belittling the social duties in man's life as against the intellectual and spiritual experience. All these gained a wider social base for Sri Vaishnavism. It is known for its use of *Ubhaya Vedanta* (double *Vedas*, both Sanskrit and Tamil scriptures equally emphasised). The language used was *Manipravalam*, a new one, a mixed language – Sanskrit and Tamil. The language itself is the message, radical, as it uses Tamil as a scriptural language, albeit along with Sanskrit, a 'situational language', symbolic of a synthesis. Yet 200 years after Ramanuja, a schism took place resulting in *Vatakalai* (which gave more importance to northern (Sanskrit) scriptures) and *Tenkalai* (which gave more importance to southern (Tamil) scriptures) sects. The mythicisation of the life-stories of the Alvar and acharyas, deification as *amsa avatars* (partial incarnations) of Vishnu, the emanation of the *parampara* from Vishnu himself and the fabrication of events characterise the hagiographic literature of this sect. *Guruparamparas* or lineages of matha organisations, individual Sri Vaishnava families is another important feature of this sect. Even the non-Brahmin families have their own Guruparamparas. The importance of the Guru in mediating between god and devotee is stressed in the texts of both the sub-sects.

Sri Vaishnava tradition attempted a pan-Indian identity through a search for Vedicisation under Vijayanagara, constructing a common Sri Vaishnava

identity in a pan-regional context through spiritual leaders and temples, but ended up in manifold identities due to regional organisation i.e. the Vatakalai and Tenkalai. It is in the Tenkalai in particular that their self-perception emerges as being broad-based, liberal and against caste barriers.

The Vira Saivas

The Vira Saivas of Karnataka (now called Lingayats) evolved as a powerful socio-religious force with a distinct identity in the post-Vijayanagar period. From about 12th century AD, over a period of time, they evolved their own life-cycle rituals, textual traditions and monasteries. Their founder, Basava, dissenting the brahminical tradition, forged a self-image for the Vira Saivas by building a parallel structure.

The development of their textual tradition is marked by several phases each innovative in literary forms, as well as ideals and institutional bases that they built, each phase being influenced by the contemporary concerns in the Vira Saiva attempt to construct a tradition. In the first phase, the Vira Saivas starting from Basava, sought to experience Siva without mediation, through Bhakti, expressed protest against the Brahminical caste structure, even to the point of actually breaking down these barriers and perhaps even the gender differences. They were seeking to construct a new universe by their defiance of the brahminical system. The *sthavara-jangama* (moving) dichotomy, the language, i.e., Kannada, forms of articulation, nature of protest in the spontaneous outpourings of unmediated vision etc are some of the characteristics of their non-conformist stance. *Vachana*, their earliest text is distinct from *Sruti* and *Smirti*, i.e., an active mode. The second phase i.e. the pre-Vijayanagara phase (13th to 14th cent.) makes an interesting departure from the protest of the *Vachanas* by the beginning of the hagiographical tradition, crucial to the community's evolution. The third phase, i.e., the Vijayanagara phase, is characterised by the collection, edition and interpretation of the *Vachanas* by the *Virakta*s. These attempts to systematise the *vachanas* serve as interventions by the leaders of the community to construct a tradition and thereby provide legitimacy to particular visions of the past. The fourth phase (17th to 19th cent.) is one of re-working of tradition, identities, and world-views marked by the decline of Vijayanagara and rise of a number of smaller kingdoms witnessing intense competition among the monasteries for primacy and patronage provided by the competing political authorities. The modern phase (19th cent.) is marked by the collection and publication of the Vira Saiva texts and the interpretation of the *Vachanas* to the new context of British rule.

Three areas of conflict may be recognised in the process of the evolution of this community, one, against the Jains, which is often projected as the

starting point of the movement, located in the 12th cent. Kalachuri court, the second, the defiance of existing Brahmanical structures and its central values, from the time of Basava himself and the third, a refutation of other religious groups, all of which form a part of the process of protest, liminality and the creation of an alternative order. The Vira Saivas started with a protest and defiance of existing ones (e.g. the Brahminical), but later developed ideals and institutions of the same kind and were inspired by Upanishadic, Yogic and Agamic ideals to construct a new universe.

The emergence of Vijayanagara facilitated the growth of this movement, the mathas and their branches proliferated with royal patronage under Vijayanagara. The monasteries, relatively autonomous, mediated between the Vira Saiva community, the state and society, which they continue to do even today.

In trying to establish a pan-regional state in South India – Tamil, Telugu and Kannada regions – Vijayanagara was seeking a legitimating ideology, which could supersede sub-regional and local forms of legitimacy. This was provided by a series of inter-related developments from the 13th cent., which the Vijayanagara rulers consciously promoted; in the first place, there was a high degree of Sanskritisation and Vedicisation, which seems to have brought Varna hierarchy to the fore in the institutional structures and authority relationships. Secondly, the synthesis of northern Sanskritic and the popular Tamil traditions in the canons of the respective sects. Thirdly, the re-appropriation of Sankara's philosophy in the evolution of vedantic theoretical framework of the sectarian cults. Fourthly, the revival of folk forms with brahminical legitimacy in the non-vedic, popular *Sakta*, *Kaumara* and *Ganapatya* cults. This could be read as a paradigmatic process of homogenisation for all future attempts including the colonial and orientalist constructions of the 19th-20th cent. to establish a common source for all religious traditions and communities in India and to present a single monolithic "Hindu community". But the Vijayanagara rulers seem to have attempted to create space even for the Jain community, which was still a live force in this period. They tried to resolve a conflict between the Jains and the Vaishnavas over protection of Jain centres, by describing the Jain and Vaishnava *Darsanas* as not different from each other. This could be equally read as a homogenisation of the non-Brahminical faiths too.

Vijayanagara, however, could not do away with the duality in community identities and despite the re-assertion of the varna dharma, the oscillation between caste and community identities, which became enhanced in the post-Vijayanagar (*Nayaka*) situation and even persist to this day.

Language and the Right to the City

Janaki Nair

In this shortened version of her contribution, the author after making the historical overview of different persons and movements involved in working for the ‘supremacy of Kannada in Karnataka’ points out those factors that influenced the course, strategies and component of these movements and critically analyses the concept of ‘Kannada nationalism’ and its implications for today.

Has the nationalist *vision* of Karnataka come to grief, close to turning it into a *nightmare* in the hands of some groups? This was Dr Nagaraj’s chief concern in an article that discussed the emergence of a more strident Kannada nationalism (particularly over the last two decades). He distinguished between the ‘spiritual nationalism’ of earlier writers such as Atul Venkata Rao and a ‘fear-centred nationalism’ as represented by the writings of M. Chidanandamurthy (and the activity of the *Kannada Shakti Kendra*). Consider Alur Venkata Rao’s message on the occasion of Karnataka unification in 1956.

In short, we should not forget that Karnataka is a much broader entity than Kannada. Not only the speakers of dialects, we should also not forget the minorities who speak other (neighbouring) languages- in the construction of united Karnataka this is a principle to be kept in mind. In other words, Kannada has the dominant status. But knowledge is welcome from all sides.¹

Chidanandamurthy’s prose, and the copious outpourings of the *Kannada Shakthi Kendra*, on the other hand are marked, not just by fear, but by *envy* of the more muscular Tamil nationalism. And indeed the self-confidence of Alur yields way to the aggressively defensive stand of Chidanandamurthy,

1 Alur Venkatrao, *Karnatakavada Vikasa*, (1980, p. 148) as cited in DR Nagaraj, “The Nature of Kannada Nationalism” *Katha Sahitya*, Akshara Prakashana, 1977. Trans. By Madhava Prasad (forthcoming).

and the transition from this to a “secular socio-politics” occurred only in the work and vision of P. Lankesh. Dr Nagaraj’s own humanism led him and several others such as Lankesh, to consistently oppose the ‘language of violence and militancy’ as a solution to the predicament of Kannada and indeed Karnataka itself.² The secular socio political base which values the multiple strand that make up contemporary Karnataka (not the least of which are linguistic minorities) has been solely tested on more than one occasion over the last two decades, and in particular 1991 and 1994, when two different minorities, Tamils and Muslims, were singled out for attack, and the current impasse once more strains the relationship between Kannada and Tamil. But one might go further to suggest that the identity of Karnataka itself is endangered when its constituent elements are threatened, for who will hesitate to acknowledge Karnataka’s debt to the literature and labour of the Marathi, Urdu, Telugu and Tamil speakers?

The invasion of computer technology has done nothing to resolve or render irrelevant the crisis within which the Kannada language and the state find itself. The impasse, in which a cultural icon of Karnataka Rajkumar has been held hostage for over three months by Veerappan and his allies closely identified with Tamilnadu, is a sign of the uneasy fit between economic development and cultural politics. I have elsewhere argued that the predicament stems from Kannada’s *dominated* status within Karnataka, not in *demographic terms*, as the Votaries of the *Shakti Kendra* would like to insist, but *within economic and cultural spaces*. (In demographic terms after all, the estimated 40 percent of Bihari Hindi speakers in Calcutta or the substantial number of Telugu speakers in Chennai has done nothing to challenge the hegemony of Bengal or Tamil respectively in Bengal and Tamilnadu). Rather if, following Pierre Bourdieu in *Language and Symbolic Power*,³ we adopt the notion of a ‘linguistic market’, an economy within which particular language competencies take on value. We may discern the deeply segmented and far from unified linguistic market which has developed in Karnataka. It is a linguistic market that sustains a division of labour between different languages and language competence, resulting in the very restricted sphere within which Kannada may circulate. The restrictions imposed by

2 I have discussed these positions briefly in “Memories of Underdevelopment: Language and its Identities in Contemporary Karnataka” *EPW* 31, 41, 42 (1996) and in “Battles for Bangalore: Reterritorialising the city” (unpublished).

3 Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994, p. 45. Bourdieu’s chief concern is the emergence of a standardised French, as an official language that triumphs over the patois.

such objective factors as geography and demography appear then as far less crucial in defining the predicament of Kannada than those imposed by the economy or the organisation of the political sphere.

The overwhelming influence of English as an internationally hegemonic language, in the commercial, financial, scientific or IT fields, or the dominance of Hindi and Tamil in the cultural spheres (e.g. TV and cinema) leaves Kannada to its lonely reign over the literary sphere, and within the space of domesticity. Strenuous attempts to make Kannada the administrative language of the region have done little to recast the segmented linguistic market or compensate for the division of labour between languages that has emerged. Although Kannada has been the official language of the state since 1963, and by and large the language of governance, it does not sufficiently undo its dominated status.

The Sites of Domination

“The name is Karnataka, now let the breath be Kannada” (*hesaraayithu Karnataka, usiragali Kannada*) was the rallying call of poet Chennavira Kanavi, which suggests that the linguistic reorganisation of states in 1956, an administrative act, did not automatically bring linguistic dominance in its wake. Clearly, the state machinery has a large role to play in making this a reality, and as Sumati Ramaswamy’s recent work has shown, even such a robust nationalism as that of Tamil could not do without the state’s support in making the de facto language of the state.⁴ The state has repeatedly been viewed as failing in its duty towards the language, thus pressing others to play a role to get language its due e.g. Kannada Chaluvaligaru, Shakti Kendra etc.

It needs come as no surprise that the city of Bangalore has become emblematic of the dominated status of Kannada by the last census (1991); only 35 percent of the people declared Kannada as their mother tongue. The demographic deficit is produced as humiliation in ultra nationalist discourse. The kannadiga is here a “local refugee” said Ra Nam Chandrasekhar, an HAL employee who has produced some of the most detailed analyses of the demographic data to prove that Kannada has a fugitive presence in the state capital.⁵ This is both a result of, and a cause for, the “Kannadiga’s lack of

4 Sumati Ramaswamy, *Passions of the Tongue: Devotion in Tamilnadu 1891-1970*, Delhi: Munshilal Manoharlal, 1998, pp.161-68.

5 Interview with R. Nam Chandrasekar October 7 and 11, 1998. See also the chapter “Valase” in *Kannada-Kannadiaga-Karnataka*, p. 163-168.

self respect and the limitless tolerance of others' needs which have been represented as 'positive' attributes (the "large heartedness of the Kannadiga" or the 'civilised' Kannadiga' etc.), and trick the guileless Kannadiga into happiness.⁶ The 'cosmopolitanism' which is hailed by the city's bourgeoisie and the English Press in particular takes on a pejorative meaning in Kannada writings which prompt some to state that if this situation continues the whole of Karnataka itself may become cosmopolitan. This demographic lack may be redressed in a number of ways: by encouraging migration into the city from north Karnataka. One speaks of the 'wounds' inflicted by *geography*,⁷ namely, the location of Bangalore near the borders of two other states, Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu.

The use of demographic data is particularly attractive stratagem since it quickly lays bare the dominated status of Kannada in Karnataka and particularly Bangalore, compared with Chennai, Thiruvananthapuram or Hyderabad. But the Kannada movement did not owe its origins to the activities of the Shakti Kendra (begun in 1988), nor the *abhimanigala sanghas* (begun in 1982). Nor do these groups today monopolise the struggle to build a new identity for Kannada. What then were the Kannada movements' early forms after state reorganisation and how have these been transformed since the 1980's to raise not only new demands but adopt new strategies in the achievement of its goals? How do other groups such as Karnataka Vimochana Ranga for instance, envisage and work towards *another Kannada nation* and with what success?

In the early 1960's there were two principal sites of struggle for the Kannada movement. As Old Mysore withdrew from its cultural dependence on the Madras Presidency; there was a call to support indigenous (Karnataka) cultural productions. As Na Krishna Rao (Aa Na Kru) and Ma Ramamurthy of the Karnataka Samyuktha Ranga were among those who demanded that Kannada singers be given a place in the annual Ramotsava cultural festivals, then dominated by artistes from Tamilnadu. Cinema too was emerging as a site of struggle in the 1960's. On the one hand, leaders of the Kannada movement objected to representations of Karnataka in Tamil films: in *Kanchi Thalaivan* (1963) a Tamil film, the humiliation of Mayuravarman, Kadamba King, at the court of the Pallavas at Kanchi was taken as a humiliation of the

6 Chidanandamurthy, "Kannadadha Smasyegalu" in *Kannada-Kannadiga-Karnataka*.

7 The States Reorganisation Committee (1956) acknowledged the particularly fragmented political status of Kannada speakers, who were reduced to minorities in three of the administrative divisions of Karnataka in colonial India.

entire nation and the movie was withdrawn from circulation. There were also growing demands for the screening of more Kannada films in the city. At the start of his political career, Vatal Nagaraj threatened to shut down, through violence if necessary, the theatre where Tamil films were being shown, particularly in the Majestic area. Finally, in order to stress the separation of the new linguistic state from its earlier cultural moorings, there were appeals to Kannada actors such as Kalyan Kumar, to refuse to act in Tamil films. The search for a way to dominate the sphere of the cultural has passed through many phases even when Kannada films have a more assured presence in the city, periodic protests against the dubbing of other language films or 'remakes' have continued.

In the realm of Public sector, the Kannada sector movement was relatively more successful. Here the entitlement not only to a salary but a whole new way of life in the city; good wages for fairly undemanding work was accompanied by housing, transport, subsidised canteens etc., all of which were the gains consolidated by a left wing trade union movement. Begun in the 1940's and 1950's the big four units, HAL, BEL, HMT and ITI employed largely Tamilians or Malayalees, until the 1960's when a combination of demographic shifts, management policies and new cultural politics began to gain ground.

Since the 1950's with the development of the linguistic states, migration from erstwhile Presidency areas into Bangalore has been gradually replaced by migration from the rural Karnataka. Labour mobility (of the Tamil vs. the Kannadiga labourer for instance) has been transformed, slowing down inter-state, while enhancing intra-state migration. This process has been matched by recruitment policies in BEL; for example, the strength of the AITUC was challenged in 1967 by Workers' Unity Forum, which consisted primarily of new Kannadiga (middle peasant caste) migrants, who were encouraged by a management anxious to curb left wing militancy. The large number of Kannada Sanghas, which participated in *Gokak Chalvali* (Gokak agitation) of 1982, was ample indication that the tide had turned in favour of the Kannadigas. Indeed the decision of the Devaraj Urs Government to make the Kannada test compulsory for class 2, 3, and 4 employees in Government even led to a temporary decline in the activities of the Chaluvaligars⁸. So much so, the Sarojini Mahishi Committee report which recommended that 100 percent of the group D jobs, 80 per cent of the next scale, and up to 65 percent of all

8 TM Joseph, *Politics of Recruitment in Public Sector undertakings A study of Nativist Movement in Bangalore*, unpublished Ph.D. Thesis ISEC, 1994, p. 69. 158.

other categories in the public sector be reserved for Kannada speakers, came at a time when the Kannada speakers were a growing presence in nearly all public units, though still not the overwhelming majority. The 'sons-of-the-soil' campaign resurfaced in the 1980's with the Hegde government's decision to reverse this policy, and became the first agitation on the question of jobs led by the Rajkumar Abhimanigala Sangha.

The Gokak Chaluvali of 1982, at first a movement of literates, artists and academics, centred in the Hubli Dharwad region which also included significant number of women, brought a fresh and positive unity to the Kannada movement, while drawing a whole range of new groups to its fold of which the Rajkumar Abhimanigala Sangha was the most important. The entry of Rajkumar into the Gokak Chaluvali truly made it a mass movement, with the actor addressing meetings all over the state.⁹

Informal Economies and 'Politics in a New Key'

Two simultaneous processes in the 1980's altered the composition, course and strategies of the Kannada movement; the marginalisation of the public sector and its (usually left wing) trade unions, and the increasing informalisation of the economy. When the long and bitter public sector strike ended in 1981, the eclipse of this sector as prime employer was already under way. Not surprisingly the more important arena of action in the 1980s was the symbolic reterritorialising of the city; red and yellow Kannada flag poles that mushroomed all over the city after 1982 were compensating *visibly* for what might still be *credible* absence. The Kannada Shakthi Kendra took up these cultural questions with an added zeal, and the Kannada movement took on more pointed attack against the minorities; particularly against Tamils. Protests against the principal language of liturgy in churches all over the city, namely Tamil or, less often, English, the active naming of roads, and opposition to symbols which consecrated other (linguistic) cultural heroes were seen as crucial areas of intervention to make the city reflect more closely the cultural entity of which it was a part.

Even so the contentious question of language in the city was not serious enough to warrant the attention of the state apparatuses: The Deputy Commissioner of Police (Intelligence) confessed before the ND Venkatesh Commission inquiring into the violence against Tamils in 1991, that "for purposes of collection of intelligence he had made some classification such as labour problems, communal problems, etc. but he is certain that *linguistic*

9 "Raj jumps into fray" *Deccan Herald*, April 17, 1982.

relationship with the City population was not a subject for gathering information.”¹⁰ There came a time when the issue of jobs for Kannadigas was less important than the questions of rights to the land and water. The Cauvery water dispute has since the 1980’s increasingly been constructed as a dispute exclusively between *two linguistic regions*.

Land Rights and the Geographies of Violence

The historical conjuncture at which the violence against Tamils occurred in 1991 is of some importance. It was a time when the right to land whether within the city or elsewhere had become both more uncertain and yet more critical as a resource in an informal economy. Conflicts over land rights within the city had heightened in the decade when the population increased by a massive 76 per cent (1971-1981). The 1991 and 1994 riot against Urdu speaking Muslims was concentrated in the western part of the city, where land rights were most precarious, a terrain that was fully occupied by illegal constructions and further, hilly ground that made surveillance difficult. The riots did not affect Tamils in the eastern part of the city. The Venkatesh Commission noted that violence was confined to 13 police stations limits, all of, which were contiguous, and in the western part of the city.¹¹ There was a striking congruence between these affected areas and those targeted in the anti-Urdu telecast riots of 1994, the properties and businesses of Muslims were now singled out for attack in the same western division of the city off Mysore Road.¹²

Both in 1991 and 1994, the property and livelihoods of Tamils and Muslims came in for far more sustained attack than lives per se. Of the 23 deaths that are believed to have occurred in 1991, 17 were due to police firing and six due to mob violence. Property loss in these riots was put at Rs. 17 crores both in Tamilnadu and Karnataka by the Indian Peoples’ Human Rights Tribunal.¹³ In the anti-Urdu riots 25 were killed, an equal number dying as a result of police firing or stabbing injuries. These are shocking statistics for a city that had no previous history of such deathly violence, but the statistics relating to the loss of private property and livelihoods and the threat posed to the

10 *Report of the ND Venkatesh Commission of Inquiry*, volume 1, p 52 (emphasis in original).

11 *Report of the ND Venkatesh Commission of Inquiry*, vol. 1, p. 2-3.

12 *Medium for Communalism: A Report on the Anti-Urdu Communal Riots*, Bangalore, People’s Democratic Forum, 1994, p. 5-7.

13 *Indian People Human Rights Tribunal Report*, Annexure IV.

continuance of certain social groups in the western part of the city were indicative of much more enduring strategies of altering claims to an area or neighbourhood. This definite link between the growing violence of language politics in the past two decades (and particularly in 1990s) and transformations within the economic sphere, however, must not obscure the work of ideologically constituting and mobilising, the Kannada people in the name of nationalism.

Modes of Mobilisation

Events in the last two decades have hardened the position of both Kannadigas and Tamils who may formerly have been political allies within the trade union or the Dalit movement and even the linguistic movement. The defensive Tamil response to the relentless campaign against migration into the city has been to produce a mythicised past that speaks of Tamils as the original inhabitants of the Bangalore and Kolar districts; even Kempe Gowda the founder of the city was a Tigala who belonged to the Tamil Vanniyar caste.¹⁴ There were many voices raised against the ferocious attacks on Tamils and Tamil properties, by a range of organisations and individuals in Karnataka. Could these alternative positions, no matter how weak, be taken as resources for envisaging another Kannada nation.

Another Kannada Nation

An opposition between the sites of democratic (patriotic) actions and (modern) nationalism may be relevant in delineating the strands of the Kanda movement. At the present time, there is no doubt that the dominant strand is one that calls for the kind of ethnocultural unity that Viroli warns against. But there are many signs of political activities in Karnataka that complicate the picture of a resolutely ethnocultural nationalism. Until 1987, said Radhakrishna, President of Jaga Mechchida Maga Dr Rajkumar Abhimanigala sangha, the sanghas were intolerant, particularly of the large minority of Tamils.

After 1987 we realised we were wrong. By this time, a lot of gaps had grown between Kannada and Tamil brothers. After 1987, our viewpoint changed. People who live in Karnataka are called Kannadigas. Kannadiga is not the one who knows Kannada. Those who live here, who migrated for the sake of livelihood.....they also are the people of the state. Both (Kannada

14 *A Mute genocide: A report on the gory incidents of violence on Karnataka Tamils during the Black December 1991*, Bangalore: Bangalore Tamil Sangham, 1992, p. 39, 40.

and Tamil speakers) should join our movement (which opposed the rapacious forces of the market in globalised consumption).¹⁵

There is recognition among such groups as the Karnataka Vimochana Ranga (KVR) that the only language that the Karnataka State is actively promoting is the *language of capitalism*, and resistance to that calls for a critique of development paradigm itself. The current campaign to halt work on the massive acquisition of land of the Bangalore-Mysore infrastructure project has been joined by respected Gandhians such as HS Doreswamy, green activists, KVR, Dalit groups and branches of the Rajkumar Abhimani.

Other critiques of the dominant voices on the predicament of Kannada have come from unexpected quarters, and adopt other strategies of mobilisation. The Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha, though not unambiguous in its agenda, has consistently questioned the emerging ‘sovereignty of the market’ which has begun to reduce the role of the state to that of ‘service provider’. Further, its critique of the absorption of rural resources of cities has even led to a demand that no more Cauvery water should be allowed to flow into the city of Bangalore. A strong feminist critique of the gendered discourse of linguistic politics has laid bare the inadequacies of forming the subject of the Kannada nation male. And although Karnataka’s Dalit groups have wavered more recently on whether they must support the strident call to defend Kannada identity, they remain only uneasily aligned with the clearly pro-Hindutva version of Kannada nationalism.

Still it would be futile to deny that there is widespread support for the programmes and activities of the more extreme linguistic nationalisms, especially during the current crisis which has increasingly (and dangerously) been read as an “encounter between nationalisms”. Such readings sweep complex histories out of sight leaving the borders of the administrative state as the final space within which such identities may unfold. Nothing could be further from the fanciful wish of the advertisement for BPL mobiles which proclaims “Geography is history”! But it is possible even in these trying times, to detect the voice of anguish about the destiny of a language threatened by the ‘cosmopolitanism’ so dear to the votaries of globalisation who promise “a slice of the US in India” at least in Bangalore.¹⁶ Karnataka’s unique state formation, geography and history may be the starting point for conceiving a different kind of nation, one that gasps both ends of a slippery pole to ‘achieve universality though being specific’ as DR Nagaraj has suggested, by placing the gathering passions at the service of a new democratic citizenship.

15 Interview with R. Radhakrishna, July 20, 1999.

16 These words were those of Sanjoy Dasgupta, former secretary IT, Government of Karnataka, at Bangalore IT>COM, 1998.

Identity-Consciousness of the Christian Madigas Story of a People in Emergence

Jose D. Maliekal

The author, a research scholar in the School of Philosophy and Religious Thought, University of Madras is presently engaged in field research, among the Catholic Madigas of Konaseema, East Godavari District, Andhra Pradesh. In the present article, he tries to journey along with the Madigas, in their quest for identity, especially after their encounter with Catholicism in Konaseema. Employing the Gramscian theme of contradictory consciousness, as a hermeneutical tool, he analyses and interprets the struggles and contradictions, involved in this encounter. Main thrust of the article is that the Madigas, in their persistent subaltern agency, are still in search of autonomy and identity, trying to move beyond the religious hegemony of the leadership, which is supposed to be a critical catalyst, in this very process of the struggle for identity. In conclusion, the author tries to propose a subaltern hermeneutical model, for interpreting the praxis-oriented religiosity of the Subaltern Madigas.

I. Introduction

The Problematic of identity-consciousness

When Ebenezer, the village elder and the Madiga ideologue, of Kesinakurru in Konaseema, Andhra Pradesh boasted that *St. Thomas, the Apostle was a Madiga*, because he had dared to place his fingers into the wounded flesh of Jesus, he was presenting the software-chip of a potential Madiga identity theology. He was trying to assert his pride in his traditional trade, the identity-marker of his caste, by tracing an aetiology for it and taking off the stigma attached to it.

Who are the Madigas?

Madigas belong to the scheduled castes of Andhra Pradesh. They are economically backward and socially marginalised and constitute around

half the population of the dalits of the state, who go to make up 15% of the total population in the state. Their traditional occupation (*Kulavrti*) is leather-tanning and footwear making, which is considered to be a polluting profession. The Madigas, who are reckoned as a left-handed caste, are in constant enmity with the other predominant scheduled caste of Malas, who are counted as a right-handed caste. This traditional enmity was aggravated in the wake of the recent *Madiga Reservation Poratta* agitation, where the Madigas demanded a further categorisation of the 15% reservation available to the dalits, on the grounds that the upwardly mobile Malas had cornered the lion's share of the opportunities offered by the reservation. This micro-Mandalisation of the Andhra Pradesh political scenario led to the fragmentation of the dalit population of the state, though it enhanced the identity-consciousness and awareness among the Madigas.

In the present article, attempt is made to journey along with the community of Christian Madigas of Andhra Pradesh, in their own quest for identity, autonomy and critical consciousness. These three dimensions of identity-consciousness also have to do with the contextual factors, like political economy and socio-economic context, ideology, power and historiography.

My reflections are mainly based on my fieldwork, among the Catholic Madigas of Konaseema of East Godavari District in Andhra Pradesh, where the first Catholic conversions took place around 1942. I have relied also on the data on the mass movement of the Madigas of Ongole area, towards Christianity, around 1867, through their conversion into the American Baptist Church.

II. Madigas and Their Encounter with Christianity

Madigas' Search for Identity - Christianity, an Alternative

Madigas, who were in search of their identity found in Christianity, a welcome home, where they experienced acceptance and a sense of dignity, especially in times of socio-economic dislocations. They received education, relief and a sense of security and protection from the missionaries. Membership in the Christian Church and association with the missionaries, who enjoyed superior status in society, meant accruing of a certain social capital to the Madigas. Faced with the fear of evil spirits, black magic and the very real experience of rampant infant mortality, the arrival of the *Prabhu* (Jesus) gave them an experience of power.

At the micro-level, the call by the missionaries, to desist from work on Sundays and from eating carrion, as was the practice among the Madigas, did cause its socio-economic ripples in the villages of Andhra Pradesh. With the support and the sense of security provided by the missionaries, the Madigas eventually broke free, also of the custom of having to carry the carcasses for burial or for skinning, under obligations, prevailing under the *jajmani* system.

At the macro-level, Christianity, in its garb of colonial modernity, did play the role of an alternative to the Hindu society, founded on the socio-economic bulwark of hierarchy and the attendant *jajmani* system. The mass movement at Ongole from 1867 and the conversions of Konaseema were not an attempt at *sanskritisat*. Rather it was as an *opting out* of the system, an act of asserting their identity and expressing their protest and resistance to a system, which had been meting out to them, a treatment, befitting less than human beings. This mode of *opting out*, is a strategy with the subaltern communities, who find themselves often fragmented and are not able to capitalise on horizontal group solidarity, as a means for upward mobility.

There seems to be a scholarly consensus that the underlying motivation for such mass conversions was a search for greater sense of personal dignity, self-respect and freedom from bondage to oppressive landowners, and not merely material relief. So the epithet 'Rice Christians', often attributed to the Madiga Christians of Andhra Pradesh, is a negation of their subaltern agency and search for identity.¹ Mass conversions are in a way, the assertion of the growing religious subjectivity of the subaltern peoples, an attempt to contest the monopoly of the ascriptive religiosity, by constructing their own religious universe.

The Madigas always claimed that they belonged to the *Pedda Inti* (big family), in myth and real life, implying by the statement, their ironic protest against their suppression and alienation in society. They gave expression to this constant assertion and resistance, through everyday protest and performance. Christianity, as an alternative to the hierarchical, ascriptive religion of Hinduism, provided a new avenue for the assertion of their identity. This new avenue for assertion of identity and protest had its own ambiguities, in terms of autonomy and asymmetry of power, as we shall see shortly.

Identity Without Autonomy: Colonial Christianity and its Misreading of Subaltern Religious Aspirations

1 Cf. John Webster, *The Dalit Christians: A History*, Delhi: ISPCK, p. 58.

The journey of the subaltern peoples, like the Madigas, towards identity and autonomy, is characterised by what Antonio Gramsci terms as contradictory consciousness. While trying to resist the hegemony of the dominant communities, they also consent to it.²

In their journey towards identity, idioms of domination, subordination and revolt are often inextricably linked together. It follows that subordination or domination is seldom complete, but is a process. The process is evidently marked by struggle and resistance³ and pervades all dimensions of subaltern existence, including their religiosity.

Subaltern religiosity is a medium for the assertion of identity, in which, struggle for survival and hope for the morrow are intertwined. There is the eschatology of everyday hope and protest, latent in their religiosity. This hope for the morrow, which takes the form of every-day protest is celebrated in subaltern religious experience, by invoking the spirits, whom, they feel, are very close to them. These spirits have to do with their daily hardships, associated with agricultural labour and production of food. Often, they are goddesses, who protect their hamlets from the intrusion of epidemics, as well as assaults of the upper castes and classes. Most of the gods and goddesses of the subalterns emerge from their conflictual social contexts.

The search of the Madigas for identity led them to Christianity. But this search and their response to the leaders of their new religion, European or

2 The word Subaltern is coined by the Italian Marxist theoretician, Antonio Gramsci to describe the situation of those in the lower socio-economic strata of society, which are under the ideological hegemony of the dominant classes, in complex ways, including the political and the cultural. The subaltern classes strive to overcome the hegemony and attain autonomy, as they grow in critical consciousness. This is a dialectical process. In Gramscian terms, subaltern consciousness is marked by its contradictory character, in as much as, in it, the layers of the autonomous consciousness and the dominant consciousness are interwoven. This element of domination is interiorised by subaltern consciousness. The dominant groups try to exercise their domination over the subalterns, through hegemony. Hegemony, for Gramsci, is that situation or process in which, the contradictory consciousness of the subalterns is exploited by the elite, for gaining *consensual* support. The subaltern groups *consent* to the elites, without being *coerced* by them. Cf. Antonio Gramsci, 'Notes on Italian History', in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Novell Smith (eds and trans), London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971, pp. 323-343.

3 Cf. Gautam Bhadra, "The Mentality of Subalternity: Kantanama or Rajdhama", in Ranajit Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies*, vol. VI, Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 54.

local have been informed by contradictory consciousness, at different levels and layers of life and religiosity. It has led to the hegemony of the religious leadership, as well as to the alienation of the Madigas, in different spheres of their lives. This was mainly due to the fact that the leadership was either ignorant of the dynamics of subaltern religiosity and its aspirations, or did not tap the emancipatory potential of that mode of religiosity to the fullest.

Colonial Modernity vs Subaltern Symbolic Residues

In Ongole, colonial missionary, in the modernist penchant for eradication of superstitions, called for the breaking of idols, especially *female* idols and the abolition of the institution of Matangi, the Madiga female priestess. Matangi, in Madiga consciousness, was the symbol of the feminine, the agent of liberative fecundity and solidarity. In turn, she was the medium of structural assertion of the Madigas, vis-à-vis the dominant castes, in the ritual and symbolic space, with its political overtones. So too, they were asked not to play during the village festivals, the *tappeta* or *dappu* (drum), the traditional musical instrument of the Madigas, with which the caste is identified. This was in view of preventing the converts from participating in idol-worship. Though the Madigas showed initial compliance with the injunction of the missionary, even to the point of suffering persecution, *tappeta* or *dappu* lingered in the individual and collective memory of the Madigas, acting as a symbolic residue or a memory trigger. Dappu for the Madiga meant, among other things, a symbolic weapon, associated with a particular type of dance and performance, wherein, he asserted his superiority over the Mala, his immediate contestant in the socio-economic space. Moreover, the beating of the *dappu* (drum), as a ritual act, was always associated with the awakening of the female deities, in their festivals, which could be performed only by the Madigas. This hidden transcript of the relationship between *dappu*, female deities and their idols and Madiga identity and autonomy, was lost out on the colonial missionary, who otherwise provided supportive identity to the Madigas, on his own hegemonic agenda.

Internal Colonisation and Transplantation of Alien Mindset

In Konaseema, Catholicism was first ever embraced by the Madigas, as a result of the cultural openness of the Italian missionary, expressed in his dictum “*Atme Alankaram*” (Soul is the adornment). This was uttered by the missionary to the Madigas of Pulletikurru, as a response to their anxious query, whether they should abandon their traditional finery and ornaments,

in order to become Christians, as the puritanical Pentecostals had demanded of them. But the missionaries, who followed the first Catholic colonial missionary in Konaseema, were perhaps more colonial in their missionary approach. Most of them from the south of India, displayed an air of internal colonisation, by consciously or unconsciously imposing the dominant cultural modes of their regions of origin, on the Madigas, with little or no respect for the subaltern subjectivity and religiosity of the Peoples. What they had in common with the colonial missionary, was his paternalistic protectionism. The Catholic Madigas still enjoy the strong *fatherliness* of their Catholic *Fathers*, which surely gives them a feeling of security and a sense of identity, but does make them dependent on the *Father*, generation after generation. It is a *dependent identity*, at the cost of their *autonomy*, a Gramscian dichotomy, so to say, but still intelligible, within his paradigm of contradictory consciousness.

Paternal Hegemony without Domination and Filial Immobility

The dynamics and the trajectory of the entry and growth of Catholicism in Konaseema, can be traced thus:

“Father, who came to our help” $=/=>$ Church $=/=>$ Prabhu (Lord)

This Father-centred, dependent identity, a symbol of the patriarchal structure of the Church, but actually a highly operative principle of ecclesiological praxis, is both the cause and the effect of the oft-heard *Madigamantra*. It is a *mantra* to which the missionary and the social activist, as outsiders and the Madigas themselves as insiders succumb. And the mantra goes like this: “ It is very difficult to bring about change in the Madigas and even more difficult for them to change.”

Standstill Experience of the Madigas

The experience of dependent identity and the truncated autonomy, which the Madigas are going through, are captured in the mood of standstill experience. It is felt, that individually and collectively, they are not moving *forward*, economically, first and foremost, and then culturally and socially. Neither are they moving *backward*. This lack of momentum, and the consequent lack of autonomous identity, is measured and given expression, in terms of the mobility attained by the Mala community. The common measuring-rod of comparison is “The Malas have gone ahead of us, in education, employment and economic mobility, at least by twenty years.

They have even grabbed the opportunities given by the missionaries, leaving us far behind." The reasons, as well the concrete expressions of this standstill experience, as emerging from the field-data, may be delineated in the following layers of the Madiga life.

Political Economy of Survival and the Unreachability of Education

The Madigas are traditionally landless people. Even today, very few of them can boast of having even a few cents of land. Their *Kulavrti* (traditional caste profession), of skinning carcasses and tanning leather, considered to be polluting, which engaged the entire family, provided only minimal contact with the outside world and it fetched the bare minimum for livelihood. Consequently, from the economic point of view, more children meant, more work and more money, in the survival economy. When the dictates of political economy of hunger become an overriding concern, education and other amenities look distant possibilities and luxuries. The Church did try to introduce the Madigas to education, but it was as if the Madigas were not taking up to it. For them, survival looked more important a necessity and need than education and the ensuing mobility through it, which looked very remote and elusive. The Church was evidently reading the signs of the times (*chronos*), that is, of the need of education. But where she failed, perhaps was to read the signs of the subaltern peoples (*laos*) and the place (*topos*).

Fragmentation and the Lack of leadership

High degree of fragmentation and the lack of leadership, in the community are other important reasons for this state of stagnation and the standstill mood. Added to that, of late, the Madigas find their conversion to Christianity, a hindrance to economic mobility. Membership in the Christian church places them equivalent to the backward castes, in the reservation scheme, which fact, evidently reduces their chances for job opportunities, as per the reservation quota, allotted to the scheduled castes. Their presumed mobility in the economic ladder, with the help of *their* Fathers, is also taken for granted by the bureaucracy. But the Madigas feel left in the lurch by their earlier caste Hindu masters, as well as the *Fathers* of the Church, who, according to the Madigas, are eyeing for caste conversions. It is a recent phenomenon, in the wake of Pentecostalism. Catholic Church in Konaseema is engaged in organising economic programmes like savings schemes, towards empowering women. But, it has not been able to mobilise the people, through critical socio-economic schemes, by which, they experience and *feel* that they are moving *forward*, economically, socially and politically.

Politics of Numbers and the Crisis of Identity

Seeing themselves in a minority, very often, the Madigas of Konaseema bid for peace, though they protest from within, against the system. It is an ordeal for them to obtain the caste certificates from the revenue officials. Whichever be the theoretical modes in which the phenomenon of caste is conceptualised, caste matters for a Madiga in real life, for it hurts him. It stings. The painful reality of caste cannot be just etherialised away, by theoretical jugglery, especially from a dominant perspective.

Most of the Madigas are abandoning their traditional profession of tanning and footwear making, because of the stigma attached and the intensive competition in the market, especially in the wake of globalisation, which is not an unknown entity in Konaseema. In the wake of globalisation, the farmlands, where they used to work, were converted into coconut groves, and later on into prawn-farms which earn foreign exchange. Due to lack of work in their own areas, the Madiga families are forced to migrate to far away Ongole as brick-workers.

III. Re-Imaging Christianity

Journey from Ascriptive religion to Subaltern Religious Subjectivity

To overcome this situation of dependent identity and fractious autonomy, the Madigas are to be enabled to make the journey from contradictory consciousness to critical consciousness. In this journey, the Church leaders have to play the role of *organic and participative intellectuals*,⁴ becoming aware of the dynamics of the hegemony, without coercion, which they themselves are exercising over their 'flock', in their role as father figures. This hegemony has eclipsed the subaltern agency of the Madigas and the emancipatory potential of their religiosity. The passage from hegemony to participation, and from the role of being traditional intellectuals to organic intellectuals, becomes operative in praxis, when the leadership is able to let the subaltern Madigas be the masters of their religiosity, with all its contradictions and ambiguity. Until this happens, the ascriptive religiosity

4 According to Gramsci, organic intellectuals arise from among the subalterns and share in their common sense worldview and play the role of catalysts, in the journey of their people from contradictory consciousness to critical consciousness. This is in contrast to what Gramsci conceives to be the role of the traditional intellectuals, as that of being agents of the bourgeoisie elite, to preserve the *status quo*.

of the Fathers, handed down from above, remains a separate entity, reification and a fetish, running parallel to the real-life concerns of the Madiga. It continues playing the role of a tool for perpetuating hegemony and securing the consensual support of the subaltern Madigas.

This allegiance or dependent identity is interpreted as faith, from the perspective of the dominant leadership and anything, which falls outside this ascriptive faith, is rejected as syncretic. In the concrete context of Konaseema Catholicism, the foregoing, apparently theoretical considerations, from a Gramscian perspective takes on common-sense relevance, when they are made to address the question of power, even the so-called spiritual power. How does the power of the *Prabhu* (The Lord) felt by the Madiga, becomes a subaltern, emancipatory religious experience? It becomes a subaltern religious experience of emancipatory potential, when it is received into the religious subjectivity of the subaltern Madiga, who is forced to collapse the borders between the different dimensions of his/her life, in his daily struggle. Subaltern religiosity is an expression of the religious subjectivity of the oppressed, expressing itself in a multiple process of construction and deconstruction and counterconstruction of religion and ideology. This process does not take place in a vacuum. Rather, it is contextualised within the life-world struggles for livelihood, scarce resources and resistance to socio-cultural and economic dominance.⁵

Religious Subjectivity as Identity Politics

The religious subjectivity of the Subaltern Madiga has to be a trigger, catalyst and a mode of his/her ongoing journey from contradictory consciousness to critical consciousness. It has to empower the Madiga, to tap at the emancipatory, protest-potential of the conflictual context of his/her life-struggles, leading him beyond the opium of dependent identity and fractious autonomy to integrated identity and authentic autonomy. The element of protest-consciousness in religiosity has to be brought into relief, through a political praxis, where religiosity and politics join hands with each other. This has to be achieved by making religiosity into an ally, a facilitator of the identity politics of the Madigas. This alliance and facilitation of identity politics have to be given concrete expression in the areas of traditional trade and identity, political economy and power, identity theology and the tapping

5 Cf. G. Aloysius, *Religion as Emancipatory Identity: A Buddhist Movement among the Tamils under Colonialism*, New Delhi: New Age International (P) Publishers, p. 8.

of Madiga feminine potential and lastly, the area of a Subaltern Madiga historiography.

Identity Markers and Empowering Historiographies

The process has to be set in motion, of redeeming the traditional trade from the cultural and religious stigma attached to it and the present economic alienation thrust upon it, through technology and globalisation. Madiga religious subjectivity, in the play of its emancipatory imagination must give rise to myths, which can interpret political economy, in terms of Madiga worldview. This process, in turn, can unleash the liberative potential of the Madiga community, to stake its claim in the contested space of politics, culture and power. As a part of this process, the traditional capacity in the Madiga ethos and culture for the performative protest has to be re-discovered and re-appropriated. This is also the matrix for the emergence of the potential Madiga organic intellectuals. Madiga historiographies for empowerment also have to emerge from this very same matrix. These historiographies will enable the Madigas to give voice and script to their hitherto unwritten stories, which have been suppressed and forgotten, by the dominant communities, by marginalising their contribution to culture and economy.

The Feminine and Alternative Paradigm of Power

As an integral part of the Madiga identity-theology, Madiga religious subjectivity should explore the possibility of evolving an emancipatory discourse of the Divine and the Feminine, delving deep into the goddess tradition, which is an integral part of Madiga subaltern religiosity and culture. This will challenge Christianity and society in general, to look at the dimension of power in culture, in a different way and from a much-needed feminine perspective.

Taking the Movement for Identity Forward

Dandora movement, which, perhaps for the first time in history, mobilised the Madigas, in the context of the demand for a new scheme of reservation for the dalits, had given the Madigas, a new-found awareness and pride in their *Kulam* (caste). But the movement has suffered from the fragmentation of its leadership and the apparent paucity of its agenda, which seemed practically limited to the demand for a further classification of the reservation scheme. Now that the original agenda has been achieved, the movement seems to have run aground. Madiga religious subjectivity can be a catalyst in widening the agenda of the movement, by incorporating other burning

issues, which touch the Madigas, such as the implementation of minimum wages, land reforms and enhancing of traditional trades. Another cause of immediate concern would be that of preserving and strengthening of the identities of the satellite castes of the Madigas, many of whom are families of performing artists, almost on the verge of extinction.

Identity through Interactive Solidarity

Issues like the implementation of minimum wages, especially for the agricultural labourers and the land reforms, would demand collaboration with other castes, especially the dalits, most of whom are Malas, the traditional *Other* of the Madigas. This involves capacity for dialogue and strengthening of dalit, subaltern solidarity, cutting across caste lines-building of a Dalitbahujan movement, as called for by Kancha Ilaiah.⁶ Given the post-Dandora political scenario and mood, coming together of Madigas and Malas, seems difficult, if not impossible. Madiga religious subjectivity will have to do some soul-searching in this regard and take up this challenge of strengthening identities, through interactive solidarity. This could be a reconciliatory agenda for the Dandora movement.

Conclusion

Religiosity as Holistic Development: Towards a Subaltern Hermeneutic of Madiga Quest for Emergence

The Subaltern community of the Madigas, as we have seen, opted out of ascriptive religiosity and its attendant hierarchy, into Christianity, as part of the process of their quest for identity and autonomy. Christianity has not yet succeeded in becoming a medium of identity, autonomy and much less critical consciousness, for the Madigas. The hegemonic mode of the religious leadership is evidently one of the reasons for the continued dependent identity and fractious autonomy of the Madiga community. The way to get over this situation of contradictory consciousness is, as has been argued, to make the Madiga, the master of his/her own religiosity. The subaltern religiosity, unlike the ascriptive, dominant religiosity, has as its locus, the economic or the concern for survival. The religious leader, who has made the passage from the role of being the traditional intellectual, to being the organic intellectual, has to give himself over to this logic and the latent

6 Cf. Ilaiah Kancha, *Why I am not a Hindu: A Sudra Critique of Hindutva Philosophy, Culture, and Political Economy*, Calcutta: Samya Publications 1996, pp. 114 –132.

hermeneutic of Madiga religiosity. Around the concern for the economic or wellbeing, Madiga life or religiosity has multiple, but collapsible and concentric layers of the cultural (protest-consciousness), the autonomous (psychological), and the identity seeking (political). They stand in dialectical, but symbiotic and synergetic relationship in the matrix of Madiga life. When the virus of dominant reductionism corrupts the hermeneutical-praxis of the organic intellectual, there occurs the short-circuiting of emancipatory energies, resulting in standstill, dependencies and fractious autonomies. What is required as solution or mid-term correction is a reprogramming or reinterpretation of the organic intellectual's religious software, along the hermeneutical life-ware of subaltern religiosity, which is being constantly updated.

Civil Society and the Limits of Identity Politics

Ananta Kumar Giri

In this insightful contribution, the author, a fellow of Madras Institute of Development Studies, acknowledges the importance of identity-politics today as a means for the emancipation of the marginalized. However, he is of the view that we need to be aware also of its limits which we come to realize by re-thinking identity in terms of the “other”. The civil society offers “the space for non-identitarian ethics and politics and dialogical care between the self and other”. Further, the re-thinking and reconstruction of our identities requires a self-critical approach that does not “debilitate our capacity to learn”. Such an approach will help us to transcend essentialisation of identities and overcome any constriction of freedom and choice. Finally, identity-politics needs to be moulded by a spiritual perspective that will help us to identify ourselves with the suffering of the other.

The Problem

Voluntary associations, social movements and struggles for recognition constitute a significant domain of civil society and the contemporary revival of the idea of civil society owes much to these movements and struggles. In the last four decades, social movements have fought for the recognition of suppressed groups - race, caste, ethnicity, and gender—and this struggle has a historical as well as continued contemporary significance. As Francis Fox Fiven who is otherwise critical of some of the dangerous implications of identity politics urges us to realise: “...identity politics is especially necessary to lower status peoples, to those who are more insecure, and who are more likely to be deprived of recognition and respect by wider currents of culture and social interaction. Subordinate groups try to construct distinctive and sometimes defiant group identities, perhaps to defend themselves against dominant definitions. Moreover, the construction of distinctive identities may be a necessary prelude to self-organisation and political assertion...Indeed, in the cauldron of an American politics based on

difference, immigrants who had previously recognised only a village or a locale as their homeland invented new national identities. For them, the construction of new identities was a vehicle of at least psychic emancipation, and sometimes political empowerment as well.”¹

Identity politics as an aspect of movements and struggles for recognition is an important aspect of our contemporary world. As Kevin Hetherington argues: “Identity politics is now celebrated as the arena of cultural and political resistance within society and is often viewed as indicative of a move to a new type of post-modern or late-modern society.”² But now there is a need to rethink identity, identity politics as part of a struggle to reconstruct civil society as a space of non-identitarian politics and ethics. The need for such a rethinking has been occasioned by a displacement in the emancipatory promise of identity politics. As Nancy Fraser tells us: “In the Seventies and Eighties, struggles for the ‘recognition of difference’ seemed charged with emancipatory promise. Many who rallied to the banners of sexuality, gender, ethnicity and ‘race’ aspired not only to assert hitherto denied identities but to bring a richer, lateral dimension to battles over the redistribution of wealth and power as well. With the turn of the century, issues of recognition and identity have become even more central, yet many now bear a different charge: from Rwanda to Balkans, questions of ‘identity’ have fuelled campaigns for ethnic cleansing and even genocide...”³ Such a displacement of the emancipatory promise of identity politics is also discernible closer at home. As H. Srikanth tells us about contemporary identity politics in Assam: “For creating and consolidating its respective identities, every group makes efforts to construct the ‘other’. Initially, the ‘other’ was the Bengalis, later the Bangladeshi immigrant and now it could be anyone, an Assamese, a non-tribal, a Muslim, an officer from Guwahati on a trip to Barak valley or even a resident of Lakhsmipur trying for a job in Sivasagar. As the number of identities increases, the lot of ‘others’ also multiply. The logic of the ‘other’ never looks at a person as an individual. He is always seen in relation to the community to which he belongs. The ‘other’ should always be submissive to the ‘natives’. If at any time the other persists and refuses

1 Francis Fox Piven, “Globalising Capitalism and the Rise of Identity Politics” in Leo Panitch (ed.), *Socialist Register*, London: Merlin Press, 1965, p. 106.

2 Kevin Hetherington, *Expressions of Identity: Space. Performance, Politics*, London: Sage, 1998, p. 22.

3 Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking Recognition”, *New Left Review* 3 (May / June 2000), pp. 107-120, in p. 107.

to submit, he needs to be killed or at least deported to his original homeland.”⁴ Movements of identity politics now promote “repressive forms of communitarianism” and in their preoccupation with “authentic collective identities” they “serve less to foster interaction across differences than to enforce separatism, conformism and intolerance”⁵.

In this context, there is a need to look into the limits of identity politics as a part of rethinking identity, difference, community, culture and multiculturalism. The present paper undertakes such an exploration in order to contribute to a reconstruction of civil society as a space of non-identitarian ethics and politics and dialogical care between the self and other. It submits that identity politics, many a time, has taken an involutionary turn in which there has been an assertion of one’s identity but such an assertion has not been accompanied by a self-critical move to be reflective about one’s own asserted identity and be dialogical to many others in the creation and living of one’s identity. This uncritical assertive move within identity politics constitutes a danger to self and cultural creativity. In this context, the key question is how do we live by the dignity of our identity without being involutionary and self-enclosed, closing off our doors and windows. How do we create and recreate our identities but in the process not hostile to many others who live in the ecology of such identities? This is an epochal question now when we look at the degeneration of identity politics into ethnic cleansing, and racism, and exclusionary politics of various kinds. In this context, the paper argues that we need an ethics and politics of identity formation which is not exclusionary but dialogical—identity here is integrally linked to the calling of a dialogical praxis in which the self and the other are in dialogue rather than at each other’s throat with sharpened knife. But this dialogical praxis requires self-development and self-transformation on the part of mobilisers of identities—issues which are conspicuous by their absence in the predominantly political connotation and mobilisation of civil society.⁶

Identity Politics and New Social Movements

The Dialectic of Resource Mobilisation and Identity Formation and Beyond

4 H. Srikanth, “Militancy and Identity Politics in Assam” *Economic and Political Weekly* xxxv(47), pp. 4117-4124, p. 4124.

5 Fraser, “Rethinking Recognition”, p. 119.

6 See, Ananta Kumar Giri, “Rethinking Civil Society” *Review of Development and Change*, July-December, 1999.

The new social movements have striven for appropriate identity formation on the part of the participants and this aspect of their work is contrasted with the work of resource mobilisation on the part of old social movements—party-based and class-based. But when we look at contemporary social movements, even of the new social movement variety, we find that there is an intertwining between identity formation and resource mobilisation in their work. Thus understanding the work of social movements in terms of the exclusionary or either or logic of identity and resource is not helpful and there is a need now to look at contemporary movements as embodying a dialectic of identity formation and resource mobilisation.

But central to this dialectic is the work of self-reflection or critical self-reflection. As Roop Rekha Verma argues: “The dialectic by itself does not explain the possibility of cultural change or a critique of culture...What is important to add in this dialectic is that internalisation can be reflective or unreflective.”⁷ It is the work of self-reflection which relativises preoccupation with either invariant or absolutist collective identities. In fact, in understanding the work of new social movements we need to be aware of the problem of invariant collective identity. As Sheldon Stryker tells us: “[In new social movements] movement collective identities become bases for members’ definition of self” and there is a “blurring here of individual and collective identity.”⁸

Dialectic as critical self-reflection helps us relativise our absolutist self-assertions. It seems in contemporary women’s movement there is a slow recognition of this relativisation. Proponents of women’s movements now realise the limits of speaking of women’s identity in singular as they become attentive to the differences of class, race / caste, and power within the so-called unified category of gender.⁹ In feminist studies and women’s movements there is also a recognition of the dangers of essentialising woman as an identity group. As Iris M Young writes: “The identification of ‘woman’

7 Roop Rekha Verma, “The Concept of Progress and Cultural Identity” in Eliot Deutch (ed.), *Culture and Modernity*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991, p. 533.

8 Sheldon Stryker, “Identity Competition: Key to Differential Social Movement Participation?” in Sheldon Stryker, Timothy J. Owens & Robert W. White (eds.), *Self, Identity, and Social Movement*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000, p. 24.

9 Linda Nicholson & Steven Steidman (eds.), *Social Postmodernism: Beyond Identity Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1995.

with a self-conscious political movement seems to designate arbitrarily what, from the vantage point of common sense, seems merely a specific group of women. Moreover, it also appears to restrict in a disciplinary way who gets to be counted as a 'woman.' "¹⁰ The dilemma that we face here is: "How can we use group labels without attributing to them any essential characteristics?"¹¹

But coming to terms with such challenges calls for a new mode of participation in the vision and experiments of social movements where struggle for recognition and realisation of identity is not tied only to a confrontational logic and vilification of the other. This in turn calls for, as Kevin Hetherington argues, going beyond the "Euclidean geometry of master and slave."¹² In the words of Hetherington: "Social movements have been associated with a political identity defined by a Euclidean geometry of master and slave—a geometry of opposite sides, opposing classes, opposing genders, opposing skin hues, opposing sexualities and so on. The marginalised have often adopted this geometry as well...To adopt a connotative approach means not only challenging the simplicities of denoting but also the simplicities of Euclidean thought. In many respects, the shift in attention that began in the 1960s and 1970s away from the Euclideanism of capital and labour on to other forms of politics—feminism, civil rights, environmentalism, peace campaigning—might have challenged this way of thinking about politics. Rather, however, a new Euclideanism has set in and it began with the earliest studies of new social movement theorists looking for a new historical agent (Touraine), a new source of rationality (Habermas), or a new form of identity politics and collective action."¹³

The Limits of Identity Politics

In dealing with identitarian movements then the key question is: "how do we generate ways of understanding identity as central to personal and group formation while avoiding essentialism? And how do we articulate identity so that it can be understood in relation to sociohistorical

10 *Ibid*, p. 21. Gayatri C. Spivak also makes a similar critique. Please see her, *The Post-Colonial Critic*, London: Routledge, 1990.

11 *Ibid*.

12 Hetherington, *Expressions of Identity: Space. Performance, Politics*, London: Sage, 1998.

13 *Ibid*, p. 29. Ernesto Laclau also make a similar point in his essay, "Beyond Emancipation." See Laclau, *Emancipation (s)*, London: Verso, 1996.

dynamics?"¹⁴ This calls for exploring the limits of identity politics as we appreciate its significance in democratising and pluralising an earlier centrist, unitarian, authoritarian and monological world. However, it must be made clear at the outset that the exploration of this limit is not from the transcendent and purist standpoint of an external observer but it seeks to identify with genuine struggles of identitarian movements themselves but raise attendant questions of dialogue and opening as a part of connected criticism.

The first limit of identity politics is that it reifies identities and this reification and substantialisation is not only dangerous for the other, it is dangerous for the self as well. Identity politics many a time leads to denial of choice on the part of the individuals whose identities are valorised and fought for. In their different but related ways, Andre Beteille and Amartya Sen draw our attention to this aspect of limits of identity politics. For Beteille, "the greatest threat to civil society in India comes from the intrusion of collective identities into domains that ought to be governed by rights and obligations of individuals."¹⁵ But while Beteille draws our attention to the dangers to individual freedom from collectivist identity politics, he is silent about the need for supplementing individual freedom with attentiveness to the well-being of others.¹⁶ In exploring limits of identity politics we must avoid the danger of falling into the trap of either collectivist erasure of individual freedom or individualist self-closure which does not realise and actualise one's responsibility to the other. Amartya Sen's critique of identity politics also draws our attention to denial of choice at work in such politics but here individual freedom is, at least rhetorically, linked to social commitment. Sen draws our attention to the new tyrannies that are emerging in the "unreasoned identity shifts" that are taking place in different parts of the world—"in the former Yugoslavia, in Rwanda, in Congo, in Indonesia."¹⁷ For Sen, "There is something deeply debilitating about denying choice when choice exists, for it is an abdication of responsibility to consider and assess

14 Nicholson & Seidman, *Social Postmodernism*, p. 2.

15 Andre Beteille, "Citizenship, State and Civil Society" *Economic and Political weekly*, Sept, 4, 1999, p. 2589.

16 Andre Beteille, "Reproduction of Inequality: Occupation, Caste and Family" *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 1991; Ananta K. Giri, "Well-Being of Institutions: Problematic Justice and the Challenge of Transformation" *Sociological Bulletin* 1998.

17 Amartya Sen, *Reason Before Identity*, Oxford University: Romannes Lectures, 1998, p. 21.

how one should think and what one should identify with. It is a way of falling prey to unreasoned shifts in alleged self-knowledge based on a false belief that one's identity is to be discovered and accepted rather than examined and scrutinised.”¹⁸

But one difficulty with Sen's critique of identity politics is that he gives reason an unconditional priority and does not realise the need for it to be supplemented by self-critical awareness of the limits of reason itself and the need for a hermeneutic spiritual supplement.¹⁹ At the same time, Sen quite admiringly draws our attention to the issue of what Habermas would call post-national identity formation.²⁰ Limits of identity politics urges us to realise not only the limits of assertive identitarian groups within the nation-state but also understand the limits of nation-state as a taken-for-granted ultimate frame of our identity. As Baumann would challenge us: “The nation-state ... is not simply the neutral arena within which the multicultural dream can be realised; rather, it is itself one of the problems.”²¹ In a similar spirit of critical dialogue, Amartya Sen writes: “The importance of nationality and citizenship cannot be denied in the contemporary world. But we also have to ask: how should we take note of the relations between different people across borders whose identities include, *inter alia*, solidarities based on classifications *other than* partitioning according to nations and political units, such as class, gender, or political and social beliefs?”²² In this context, Sen provides us a transnational and planetary challenge of identity formation before us: “Even the identity of being a ‘human being’—perhaps our most basic identity—may have the effect, when properly seized, of broadening our viewpoint; and the imperatives that we may associate with our shared humanity may not be mediated by our membership of collective identities such as ‘nations’ or ‘peoples’.”²³

The reign of collectivist identities unless put in place and perspective can create impediments to our realisation of ourselves as subjects. The

18 *Ibid.*

19 Ananta K. Giri, “Rethinking Human Well-Being: A Dialogue with Amartya Sen” *Journal of International Development* (in press).

20 Jürgen Habermas, *The Inclusion of the Other*.

21 Gerd Baumann, *The Multicultural Riddle: Rethinking National, Ethnic and Religious Identities*, London: Routledge, 1999.

22 Sen, *Reason Before Identity*, p. 28.

23 *Ibid.*

limits of identity politics lies in obstructing the unfoldment of an appropriate ethics and politics of the subject and in recent social theory, Alain Touraine has been foremost in drawing our attention to this. For Touraine, "The Subject is an individual quest for the conditions that will allow him to become the actor of his own history. And that quest is motivated by the pain of being torn apart, and by the loss of identity and individuation." For Touraine identity politics must be understood in relation to a thrust towards a global marketisation and both the processes threaten the unfoldment of an appropriate ethics and politics of the subject. In his words: "As it becomes more difficult in this globalised society to define oneself as a citizen or a worker, it becomes more tempting to define oneself in terms of cultural community such as an ethnic group, a religion or belief, a gender or a mode of behaviour."²⁴ Touraine movingly presents the predicament in which we are today pushed and pulled as we are between global marketisation and communitarian identity mobilisation: "Our real point of reference is not hope, but the pain of being torn apart. Because the world of objectification and its technologies has been so debased as to be no more than a market, while the world of cultural identity is locked into communitarian obsession, the individual who exists inside us all is suffering the agony of being torn apart, of feeling that his or her lifeworld is decayed as the institutional realm or even the representation of the world itself."²⁵

From the displacement of the subject that takes place in identity politics let us now come back to the issue of displacement of material interest and redistribution that accompanied many a movement of identity politics in the contemporary world. We have already had a brief encounter with Nancy Fraser's formulation of the shift from redistribution to recognition in identity politics in the introductory section. We get additional intimations of such a dangerous shift as well. Srikanth writes about the contemporary identity politics in Assam: "...the politics of identity in Assam is basically the politics of Philistines, trapped in the world of appearances, fighting imaginary crimes. It draws its strength from prejudices and misconceptions of groups about themselves and others. Its ideology masquerades class exploitation and ignores the material structures and forces responsible for their problem."²⁶ Similar is also the critique of Sarah Joseph who laments that class as an

24 Alain Touraine, *Can We Live Together? Equality and Difference*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000, p. 31.

25 *Ibid*, p. 55.

26 H. Srikanth, "Militancy and Identity Politics", p. 4124.

analytical category has been totally excluded from contemporary discussions of culture and ethnicity.²⁷ For Joseph, “The view that identity claims should be viewed as rights in particular needs to be critically interrogated. And any attempt to critically examine identity claims would necessarily involve going beyond the self-perception of individuals and groups to understand such claims in relation to wider social processes.”²⁸

But the greatest danger of identity politics is that it debilitates our capacity to learn. This is easily discernible in the case of identity politics that is taking place in India in the field of caste and religion. The Dalit movements today continue to be bound to an anti-Brahminical logic and does not explore the task of reconstruction and self-criticism outside of the villainous construction of the Brahminical other. But such an identity politics of essential Brahminical villain does not enable Dalits to learn from the life-practices of Brahminical castes especially as it relates to education. Dalits can learn the habitus of education from Brahmins as Brahminical castes can learn the art of labour from the Dalits. Such a mutual learning can facilitate the intertwining of mental learning and manual labour in both Brahmins and Dalits and this can also facilitate the transcendence of categorical identities of Brahmins and Dalits. This would also contribute to the building of a decent and dignified society.

The same problem of refusal to learn and an arrogance to kill the other which poses a challenge to our self-secured identity is witnessed in the contemporary identity politics of religion. Attack on Christian missionaries and Christian communities has been a barbaric and tragic part of the religion-based identity politics in our country. But such attacks reflect a jealousy and a will to annihilate on the part of the Hindu fundamentalist forces towards Christian missionaries. The current attack on Christians in India, at a deeper level, is a result of the envy that some belligerent Hindu organisations have towards the services rendered by some Christian organisations and their unwillingness to learn from such ethical engagement and to make Hinduism and several of its institutions undertake more service activities. It must be noted that the attitude and orientations of all Hindu movements do not represent such an attitude. For Swadhyaya, Hindus must learn from Christian missionaries to work among the unreached and downtrodden. True the service work of Christian organisations is not free from problems and one of the difficult issues here relates to exclusionary nature of many of these

27 Sarah Joseph, *Interrogating Culture*, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1998.

28 *Ibid*, p. 130.

service organisations and little democratic public access that common people have to these activities as fellow participants rather than as mere beneficiaries and recipients.²⁹ Thus there is a challenge for transformation of both the Hindus and Christians as Hindus can learn to make their religious activities focus more on concrete service programmes from the Christians and Christian leaders and organisations strive to make their institutions more accessible to people at large, facilitate more public control of these institutions, participate in the civil society and public sphere as partners of dialogue and embody the practice of what in Christian theology is called *kenosis* or self-emptying vis-à-vis the use of power.

But such a refusal to learn is antithetical to the spirit of a multicultural society. A multicultural society has to be a learning society where different cultures and individuals are open to learning from each other. But this requires, as Satya Mohanty tells us, “an adequate appreciation of the epistemic role of ‘culture’” which provides us “deep bodies of knowledge of human kind and of human flourishing.”³⁰ Each culture is an epistemic community and provides us a unique mode of knowing the world but this knowledge is not destined to be particular, rather it always seeks for a universal manifestation.³¹ Genuine multiculturalism requires the flourishing and practice of “epistemic co-operation”³². This in turn requires opening and learning from the members which assertive identity politics makes it difficult to happen. But this epistemic learning is not simply a question of epistemology as it seems to be the case with Satya Mohanty but involves ontological preparation and work on self-development on the part of self, culture and society. An ontological opening for epistemic co-operation can facilitate the realisation of “cultural communication” and “cultural liberation” and contributes to the much-needed “recomposition of the world”³³ in these days of fragmentation and deconstruction.

It hardly needs to be stressed that such a vision and practice of multiculturalism calls for a reformulation in our conceptions of culture and

29 Cf. Felix Wilfred, *Asian Dreams and Christian Hope*, Delhi: ICPSK 2000.

30 Satya P. Mohanty, *Literary Theory and the Claims of History: Postmodernism, Objectivity, Multicultural Politics*, Delhi: Oxford U. Press, 1998, p. 240.

31 Cf. R. Sunder Rajan, *Beyond the Crisis of European Sciences*, Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, 1998.

32 *Ibid.*

33 Cf. Touraine, *Can We Live Together? Equality and Difference*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000.

communities. As Baumann reminds us: "Multiculturalism is not the old concept of culture multiplied by the number of groups that exist, but a new, and internally plural praxis of culture applied to oneself and to other."³⁴ But identity politics has its limits in realising such a vision and practice of culture. It also has a naturalised view of community but community is not only the storehouse of naturalised identity, it also has a moral dimension which calls for what Habermas calls a "post-conventional" identity formation on the part of the participants.³⁵ In such an identity formation, identity needs cannot be easily satisfied by appeals to communitarian frameworks; rather it requires a morally just identity formation on the part of the actors.³⁶ Such a process of identity formation calls for rethinking community as not merely a space of conformity but as a space of responsibility. In fact, in thinking about community there is a need now to make a move from community as a space of "descriptive responsibility" to it as a space of "normative responsibility" where as Calvin O. Schrag passionately tells us: "Responsibility, nurtured by the call of conscience, supplies the moral dimension in the narrative of the self in community."³⁷

Rethinking and Reconstructing Identity and Difference

Such a view of culture and community calls for a different conception and realisation of self-identity. Identity is not only a matter of a priori formulation and categorical determination; it is also an aspect of an unfolding narrative. To talk of identity then is to talk of narrative identity as Paul Ricouer would teach us and this is crucial to our idea of a capable subject. For Ricouer, "[We must distinguish] between the identity of the self from that of things. This latter kind of identity comes down in the final analysis to the stability, even the immutability of a structure...Narrative identity, in contrast, admits change. The mutability is that of the characters in stories we tell, who are emplotted along with the story itself."³⁸ Self-esteem and

34 Gerd Baumann, *The Multicultural Riddle*, p. vii.

35 Jürgen Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990.

36 See Martin J. Matustik, *Postnational Identity: Critical Theory and Existential Philosophy in Habermas, Kierkegaard, and Havel*, New York: The Guilford Press, 1997.

37 Calvin O. Schrag, *The Self After Postmodernity*, Yale University Press, 1997, p. 100.

38 Paul Ricouer, *The Just*, University of Chicago Press, 2000, p. 3.

self-respect are crucial to this narrative identity. These are also concerns with identity politics but unlike identity politics in the pursuit and work of narrative identity, the concerns with self-esteem and self-respect are not bound to the self – individual or group, rather it overflows to the fields of the other. As Ricouer tells us in his inimitable words: “Life stories are so intertwined with one another that the narrative anyone tells or hears of his own life becomes a segment of those other stories that are the narratives of others’ lives. We may thus consider nations, peoples, classes, communities of every sort as institutions that recognise themselves as well as others through narrative identity.”³⁹

Narrative identity helps us overcome the limits of reification of identity in identity politics and this task of overcoming is further facilitated by realising the distinction between identity and identification. While preoccupation with identity has the implication of absolutisation, determination and fixation, an engagement with processes of identification makes us sensitive to the process of identity formation which is a constant negotiation between the desire to reify and the desire to fly the chains of essential fixation. In his provocative work, *The Multicultural Riddle: Rethinking National, Ethnic and Religious Identities*, Gerd Baumann urges us to realise the distinction between identity and identification. As he writes: “We will know what an identity *is* unless we have tried to dissolve it into situational identifications; we will never learn what culture is until we understand it as a dialectic, double discursive, process: People reify it and at the same time undo their reifications.”⁴⁰ Baumann urges us to “unreify all accepted reification by finding cross-cutting cleavages (among identities)”⁴¹.

The distinction between identity and identification that Baumann makes gets an enriching shift in Kevin Hetherington where “identity is performed through bricolage” rather than through the annihilation of the other. Hetherington urges us to realise the topology of identity and identification in the contemporary world where there are multiple locations and lateral and “transversal”⁴² pathways of connections and conversations among them. In the words of Hetherington: “In a world where identities cannot be attributed to singular uncomplicated subject positions (authors or narrators

39 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

40 Baumann, *The Multicultural Riddle*, p. 140.

41 *Ibid.*

42 Cf. Schrag, *The Self After Postmodernity*, Yale University Press, 1997.

outside the story), identity becomes all about multiple location and performativity within that location. Under such conditions the main issue associated with such spatial uncertainty is identification. It is through identifications with others, identifications that can be multiple, overlapping or fractured, that identity—that sense of self-recognition and belonging with others—is achieved.”⁴³

An engagement with identification also urges us to understand the experiential dimension of identity formation and experiencing identity as a process involves constant negotiation not only with those who are around us but also “internal negotiation”⁴⁴. Identity has both the dimension of self and social and rethinking identity now calls for a realisation that our identities are not exhaustively social. As Ian Craib argues:

We certainly have social identities: I am a university teacher, a father, a husband, a psychotherapist, a supporter of the English cricket team and so on. Some of these (especially the last one) could disappear without experiencing any great loss. I would have lost *an* identity, not *my* identity. If I suffer a major tragedy in my family life, ceasing to be a husband and becoming a divorced man or widower, my identity would have changed in an excruciatingly painful way but I would still have an identity. Social identities can come and go but my identity goes on as something which unites all the social identities I ever had, have or will have. My identity always overflows, adds to, transforms the social identities that are attached to me.⁴⁵

For Craib, identity politics does not understand the limits of the social in talking about identity and is a product of projective identification: “Projection is a psychological operation by which I fail to see something threatening or unpleasant part of my own make-up but recognise it readily in other people. Such a mechanism can be seen as the basis of homophobia. If I am anxious and threatened by my own homosexual desires, then I can deal with them by projecting them into other people and dealing with them thereby prosecuting and attempting to suppress them.”⁴⁶ Projective identification is a vicarious substitute to our essential and unavoidable need for emotional communication and in the practice of identity formation, this needs to be

43 Hetherington, *Expressions of Identity*, 1998, p. 24.

44 Craib, *Experiencing Identity*, London: Sage, 1998.

45 *Ibid*, p. 4. Also see, Anthony P. Cohen, *Self-Consciousness: Towards an Alternative Anthropology of Identity*, London: Routledge, 1995.

46 *Ibid*, p. 172.

transformed by discovering and nurturing our dependence on others. Contra-Habermas, for Craib, it is emotional intersubjectivity, not linguistic intersubjectivity, which is at the heart of our identity formation, and emotional intersubjectivity requires the lubricant of love and a capacity to identify with the suffering of others. As Craib tells us: "The discovery of freedom is the discovery of multiple forms of suffering and perhaps the most meaningful personal sense in which we can talk about having an identity is that our identity is the result of the quality of our suffering."⁴⁷

Bringing suffering to the heart of identity formation has the potential to transform the annihilatory logic of contemporary identity politics and such an invocation is enriched by a dialogue with Gandhi and Levinas. For Levinas, the ego must be prepared to "undergo the suffering that would come to it from non-ego."⁴⁸ As Levinas reminds us: "it is no longer a question of the ego, but of me. The subject which is not an ego, but which I am, can not be generalised..Here the identity of the subject comes from the impossibility of escaping responsibility..."⁴⁹

And this responsibility is the responsibility of identifying with the suffering of others, and not to inflict suffering on others as is the case with most instances of identity politics in the contemporary world. Such an identification with suffering requires much more than the valorisation of identity politics and the production of triumphant memory and history which does not seek to forgive, reconcile and participate in overcoming the logic of contemporary bindings. Edward Said articulates such a challenge of rethinking and reconstructing identity before us taking the predicament of Jews and Palestinians as the case in point.⁵⁰ For Said, "Israelis and Palestinians are now so intertwined through history, geography and political activity that it seems to be absolutely folly to try and plan the *future* of one without that of the other." But the creation of this common future depends on identifying with the suffering of each other. But for Said, "Most Palestinians are indifferent to and often angered by stories of Jewish suffering. Conversely most Israelis refuse to concede that Israel is built on the ruins of Palestinian society. Yet there can be no possible reconciliation,

47 *Ibid*, p. 177.

48 Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence*, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991, p. 123.

49 *Ibid*, p. 13 / 14.

50 Edward Said, "Invention, Memory, and Place", *Critical Inquiry*, Winter 2000, pp. 175-192.

no possible solution unless these two communities confront each other's experience in the light of the other. There can be no hope of peace unless the stronger community, the Israeli Jews, acknowledge the most powerful memory for Palestinians, namely the dispossession of an entire people. As the weaker party Palestinians must also face the fact that Israeli Jews see themselves as survivors of the Holocaust, even though that tragedy cannot be allowed to justify Palestinian dispossession.”⁵¹

By Way of Conclusion

Identity based movements have been important agents of change and political contestation in the contemporary world but their mobilisation now needs a hermeneutic and spiritual supplement of recognising and identifying with the suffering of others. Identity politics now needs to be transformed by an openness to the other and through such a dialogical opening we can recreate civil society as a space of ethico-political mobilisation of the subject. In such rethinking and reconstruction, the following lines of Sri Aurobindo can provide us an additional encouragement:

A lonely freedom cannot satisfy
 A heart that has grown one with every heart
 I am a deputy of the aspiring world
 My spirit's liberty I ask for all.⁵²

Madras Institute of
 Development Studies
 Chennai

51 Ibid., pp. 192-193.

52 Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

Christians as Religious Minority

A. Xavier Arul Raj – A.L. Anthony Sebastian

This brief article is jointly written by a lawyer (Xavier Arul Raj) practising in the High Court of Madras, and a project fellow (Anthony Sebastian) in the School of Philosophy and Religious Thought, University of Madras. According to the authors, the situation of religious minorities in India is more delicate since the majority community forms as much as 82% of the population. This minority needs special protection in order to ensure for them security and basic equality. The Indian Constitution tries to provide such protection. But the 'Minority Right' specified by the constitution looks like a concession granted by the majority to the minority. The Church with its minority identity should not be satisfied with the institutional benefits of the Minority Right. It needs to evolve an approach in which the Minority Right will become a protective insulation, granted to the weaker sections. In this way minority rights will be part of human rights.

In the multicultural, multi-religious and multi-lingual Indian context, minority rights assume great significance. The recent events and the communally charged atmosphere have again brought the issue to the centre-stage of Indian polity. Some people think that minority rights are a luxury and extravaganza subsidised to the minorities and therefore should be abrogated in toto.¹ Some others think minority rights are insufficient in India.²

Minority Right is part and parcel of Human Rights. While human rights system is today being promoted as a kind of world-ethic, we need to analyse a little deeper into its conceptual basis, its assumptions and the condition of its praxis much connected with the Minorities and Church in India.³ The

1 K.R. Malkani, *The Indian Express*, 21.06.1992.

2 Tabir Ahmed, *The Week*, 3rd April, 1998.

3 Felix Wilfred, *From the Dusty Soil*, Madras: University of Madras, 1995, p.17.

purpose of this paper is to examine the language of Minority rights with reference to the Indian Constitution and its relevance to the experiences of the oppressed and marginalised and the role of the Church with its minority identity.

Minority Rights – Clarification of the Concept

‘Minority’ is not confined to numerical aura. Rather, it is emphasised that minority is culturally, ethnically, racially, religiously or linguistically distinct group in the midst of a larger society. A minority is necessarily subordinate to dominant group within a society and subordinate rather than numerical minority is the principal characteristic of a minority group. A minority group must be distinct social group and must have easily recognisable characteristics that mark it off from the rest of society. A minority has defined rules of membership and cultural behaviour. The members of a minority group are denied full participation in the working of society and equal share in the societies rewards. A minority group is relatively poor, politically less powerful, subordinate to a dominant group of a society.

International and Indian Understanding

By resolution 47/135 dated 18.12.1992, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the ‘Declaration on the Rights of persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. For example article 1 states:

States shall protect the existence and the national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity of minorities within their respective territories, and shall encourage conditions for the promotion of that identity. States shall adopt appropriate legislative and other measures to achieve those ends.

There are three broad categories, viz., ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities as recognised by the International forums. The states have certain definite and unavoidable duties towards minorities. Minority rights are intrinsically tied up with human rights. There are also natural restraints to minority rights such as sovereignty and National Integrity. Therefore, the minority rights have to be situated in these contexts, rather than being approached as an isolated problem.

Indian Understanding

The minorities in India are categorised into religious and lingual minorities. There is no clear-cut definition with regard to ethnic minorities, or racial

minorities, in Indian law. India is a vast country with 100 crores of people living in six lakhs villages, speaking more than 600 languages and dialects.

Shermerhorn has categorised 10 minority groups in India.⁴ (1) the scheduled castes (2) Scheduled tribes (3) Jains (4) Sikhs (5) Muslims (6) Christians (7) Anglo Indians (8) Jews (9) Parsis (10) Chinese. Of these the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes who are called the depressed classes, are not classified as a minority group in Indian law. This is a fall out of the Indian caste system or Varnashrama Dharma. As pointed out earlier the Indian minorities are strictly either religious or lingual and not otherwise.

Of the ten categories that Shermerhorn has described, the Muslims, the Christians, the Sikhs, the Jains, the Parsis, and the Jews fall within the religious category. The Chinese and Anglo Indians are more an ethnic category. Ethnic category is not recognised as a separate identity under Indian constitution. They are treated either as religious or lingual minority.

To sum up, the Minority is any community, linguistic or religious, which is less than 50% of the entire state population. Since Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain and other religious groups are less than 50%, they are religious minorities under Article 30 (1) of the Constitution.

Minority Rights - In the Indian Constitution

The Indian constitution uses the terms 'Minority' or 'Minorities' in four of its Articles, namely, Articles 29, 30, 350 and 337 Article 337. deals with the special provision with respect to the educational grants for the benefit of Anglo Indian Community. The period stipulated in Art. 337, having expired, this Article has ceased to be operative from 1960, and there is no longer any constitutional right of Anglo-Indian educational institutions to receive special protection. Therefore, virtually there are only three Articles that comprise the basis for our study of the Minorities in India.

Even though the Constitution deals with 'Minority' or 'Minorities' it has not defined the terms 'Minority' or 'Minorities' anywhere. Nor does the Constitution delineate the criteria for determining 'Minority' or 'Minorities'.

In order to bring a particular case under the above-referred four Articles, a community has to first establish its character as linguistic, scriptural, cultural or a religious minority. There is no categorical definition or criteria for determining minority in the Indian constitution. In the absence of any

4 Shermerhorn, *Comparative Ethnic Relation: A Frame Work for Theory and Research*, The University of Chicago Press, 1970.

constitutional guidelines, one is left only with legal interpretations of the term 'Minority' or 'Minorities'. Even though the four Articles deal with the 'Minority' or 'Minorities' the Articles 29(1) and 30(1) form the bedrock of minority rights. Articles 350-A and 350B are only consequential and additional to the provisions under Articles 29(1) and 30(1).

Critical Evaluation

Benefits

Our country is a democratic country. Fundamental rights and minority protection are basic to our democracy. Democracy is not just the government by a majority, ruling the country according to its whims and fancies. But democracy is people's government, where the basic rights of all are protected and the interests of all are taken care of, to the extent possible.

The founding fathers of our constitution felt that there could be the danger of the minorities being denied fundamental freedom especially in education. Hence, they gave a constitutional guarantee to the freedom of education. Article 30(1) is declared to be a fundamental right of the minorities. Explaining the Draft Article, Dr. Ambedkar stated:

"The present - situation is that we have converted that into a fundamental right so that if a state made any law which is inconsistent with the provisions of this Article, then that much of the law could be invalid. This article 30(1) is nothing but a re-assertion of the Universal right to educate."⁵

The defence of minority rights, therefore, is indirect defence of the rights of every one. Indian Constitution has realised it and legalised accordingly, recognising the natural right, of all people to educate children. Schools and Colleges may be the meeting point of peoples, language and culture. But they should in reality serve the minority in the general context of human rights of all people.

Shortcomings: The minority communities recently are subjected to numerous disabilities by the dominating majority in India. Until 1946 like the Scheduled Caste and Tribes the minorities had reservation in Legislature and Public Services. Christians had gladly and willingly surrendered their safeguards and privileges and paid a high price just to get Article 30 (1) as the Constitutional guarantee towards minority protection.

Article 30 (1), we can boldly state, is purely institutional rather than people-based. This Article guarantees the right to establish and administer the institutions, which the poor cannot do. The majority of the minority are left with nothing due to this right. Only the moneyed segment in the Church and the powerful class of Muslims are benefited and are benefiting.

Earlier reservation in Legislature and Public Services worked as an incentive for higher education. With reservation abolished, even though institutional guarantee is given, minorities lost the incentive for education and gradually became backward in economy, education, politics and society.

This has created a sense of frustration and powerlessness among the minority masses. Hindu Muslim riots, tortures of Christians, massacre of Sikhs further created a sense of insecurity among minorities. Minority legislators behave like the Scheduled Caste legislatures because their success depends on the Hindu votes. People's grievances are piling up, and they are losing faith in the ruling classes. The political parties play the game of putting one community against the other for electoral gains. Scheduled Caste people have been used as tools in the hands of communal elements.

Minority Identity of the Church - Few Reflections

Among Christians, there has been restlessness due to many attacks on their members and institutions. While only 38 cases of attacks on Christians are reported between 1964 to 1996, from 1997 to 1999 around 200 recorded cases of attacks on Christians are reported. In the last one year six nuns were raped; nine nuns were killed; twenty-five nuns manhandled; sixteen priests were killed and hundreds of churches were burnt.⁶ Ironically Christian community is running the maximum number of private educational institutions in this country.

In this situation the Church needs to seriously think about its minority identity and evolve methods out of its biblical and historical roots, which will benefit the majority of the minorities. Let us point out three insights to start with.

1. Making Fringes as Centre: Majority of minorities are powerless in India. They do not get the benefits due to them. The very institutional attitude of existing minority right (Article 30(1)) is not serving the poor. The minority needs special protection in order to ensure for them security and basic equality. Treating unequal as equals is not justice, nor equality. So,

according to present situation in India, the Church has to take up seriously its minority identity and support the poor and the left out among the minorities.

Jesus' intervention on behalf of life and human rights was radical. He sided with the poor, loved the unloved and made them as the centre of his ministry. He made solidarity with the minorities of his time, the outcast, the oppressed, the victims of history's slavery, and untouchability systems and of colonial plunder. And he decided to become active in the two major sectors of the lives of minorities - the socio-economic and the religious - where they suffered and struggled. Drawing on the biblical tradition, the Church needs to emphasise the value of powerlessness as the approach appropriate to its prophetic mission. It has to be a prophetic remnant in an ocean of oppressive power. Hence the minorities who are made to live in the fringes are to become the target of support for the Church.

2. To Avail the Minority Rights to the People: Christians had gladly and willingly renounced their safeguards and privileges like reservation in legislature and public services and Hindus felt pleased with it. They showered praises on the Christians for their patriotic sense. But soon the Christians were disillusioned because in the state of Madhya Pradesh, a commission was set up to study the activities of missionaries.⁷ On the basis of the report of this commission a law was enacted to check conversion to Christianity. This was followed by a similar law in Orissa and during Janata regime in Arunachal Pradesh. Now anybody seeking conversion to Christianity in some states has to get the clearance from the police and the judiciary before approaching the priest for baptism in these states. This is not required if a person seeks conversion to Hinduism. With the funds provided to organisations like Ramakrishna Mission in the name of social welfare, Hinduism is being preached in the tribal areas. Tribals were following animism earlier. Government spends considerable time to propagate and strengthen Hinduism through television and All India Radio in the name of culture. While constitution guarantees equality, equal time slot is not allotted to all religions on the State controlled media. Hinduism gets most of the time and attention. Christians in Northern India are under pressure and many have reverted to Hinduism to get employment as members of the Scheduled Castes. Christians are being converted to Hinduism and then only issued with Scheduled Caste certificates.⁸

7 Neogi Commission Report, Madhya Pradesh Government, 1973.

8 Report, United Christian Forum for Human Rights, New Delhi, Feb.1999.

While denying the constitutional reservation to the Christians from the scheduled caste origin, discriminatory treatment is meted out to the Christians of untouchable origin in the larger society. Most of the Christians are of scheduled caste origin. They are in the bottom layer of the socio-economic order of the society.

In these circumstances, without running down the existing rights of the minorities and without diluting its emphasis, the rights should be made available to all the people, especially to the poor. The economic life, political share, social distinctions and cultural aloofness of the minorities should be studied, and a method should be evolved which will be more attuned to the lives of the people.

When the same caste fellow is denied a privilege just because he or she is a Christian, is basically against the Minority Right. Hence, the Church need to fight back the economic, caste and job reservations which was already there. This only will help the dalits of the Minorities.

3. Not to Exploit the People in the Name of Minority Rights: Mainly the educational institutions are benefiting from the Constitution. Some take this concession in their hands and exploit the personnel who work under their administration. A number of cases are with unsustainable claims, and legalities have proved that the powerful always want to enjoy and exploit. The court verdicts went against these power-lobbies and sustained the minority rights. Right to dismiss is not a fundamental right; forced resignation is not part of minority rights. Minority right cannot do away with safety standards; minimum wages is part of minority rights, payment of gratuity is part of Article 30, and gender bias is not a minority right.⁹

The pronouncements of the courts definitely indicate that there is no absolutism in the rights of the minorities. In short, from a holistic perspective, Article 30 is not absolute. There are certain excesses. But when we have to take exemption to excesses, we cannot forget the Constitutional validity and inevitability of Minority rights, in a civilised nation.

Conclusion

In a democracy, the majority is secure by the very fact of being the majority. The minority needs special protection in order to ensure for itself security and basic equality. In the matter of cultural and other elements, minorities are not equal to others.

⁹ Xavier Arul Raj, *Study on Minority Rights in India*, Dissertation submitted to the University of Madras, May 2000, pp. 75-81.

While introducing the report of Minority rights in the Constituent Assembly Sardar Vallabhai Patel Pointed out:

We wish to make it clear, however that our general approach to the whole problem of minorities, is that the state should be so run that they should stop feeling that they are oppressed, by the mere fact they are minorities, but they have as honourable a part to play in the national life as any other section of the community. In particular we think that it is the fundamental duty of the state to take special steps to bring up those minorities which are backward to the level of general community. In the long run, it would be in the interest of all to forget that there is anything like majority or minority in the country and (to realise) that in India there is only one community.¹⁰

By all standards, Minority right is not a concession granted by the majority to the minority. It is only protective insulation, granted to the weaker sections of the society. This, our minority Church needs to uphold and stand for.

10 *Constitutional Assembly Debate*, vol. V, p. 247.

“Great People”? ... “Little Flock”?

Lucien Legrand

Lucien Legrand, the renowned Biblical scholar, starts with the contemporary reality of a numerically small Christian community in Asia and asks “whether 100% Christians is the goal”. Exploring into the Biblical world he notes that there is a contrast between the promise of a numerically great people and the reality of the “remnant”. The remnant is interpreted by the prophets as a very significant theological reality, since what mattered was the continuing faithfulness and love of God and not the numerical strength. Continuing his reflection, the author finds Jesus as “God of small things” as revealed in his attitude, ministry and options. For him, salvation is not connected to numerical strength; rather it is an experience of “discovering the power of God’s love in the least glorious aspects of human existence”. Finally, Paul followed a representative strategy of implanting communities of the disciples in different cities and centres. He did not go to every place, and yet he thought that the Gospel was preached everywhere because it was represented everywhere.

In Asia particularly, Christianity is a minority religion. In India, Christians form about 2.5% of the total population. In other countries like Pakistan, Thailand and Japan, the proportion is still much smaller. We often hear regret being expressed that 2000 years of Christianity since St Thomas have resulted in such a tiny minority! Missiologists bemoan the “failure of the mission in Asia” and analyse its cause. But is it a failure? By which standard are we to gauge success and failure in such matters? Is 100% Christian population to be the goal? Or would 20 or 30% be a sufficient measure of “success”? Is a minority situation an abnormal predicament that should be remedied as soon as possible? Is redressing this situation to be the first priority of the Christian agenda? A few biblical reflections may help us to see things in a proper perspective.

I. The Old Testament

In the beginning of biblical history, the story of Abraham presents a paradoxical contrast. It started with God’s promise to the patriarch:

I will make you a great nation. The land that you see I will give to you and your offspring... I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth... Look at heaven and count the stars... So shall your descendants be (Gen. 12:2; 13:16; 15:5).

Yet when Abraham died, his innumerable posterity was reduced to a single legitimate son, Isaac, the child of a miraculous divine intervention. As for the vast land he was to inherit, at the death of his wife Sarah, Abraham had to conduct a hard bargain to purchase the few cents of rocky soil in a cave where he can buy his mate (Gen. 23).

Abraham’s story is emblematic of the whole history of Israel. The people of God had universalistic expectations based on the divine promises. Prophets foresee the day when

- All the nations shall stream (to Zion);
many people shall come and say:
‘come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord
to the house of the God of Jacob’ (Is 2:2-3; cf., Ps 72:11; 87)

On that day, Jerusalem will see the gathering of all the peoples:
Nations shall come to your light...
The wealth of the nations shall come to you
Your gates shall always be open...
So that nations shall bring you their wealth
With their kings led in procession (Is 60:3.5.11).

However historical reality was much less glorious. It amounted rather to progressively shrinking boundaries. As its greatest extent, under King Solomon (971-931 BCE), Israel formed a mini-empire, stretching from Damascus in Syria to Eilath at the entrance of the Red Sea. But within a few years, at the death of Solomon, this kingdom was divided into two. The northern part, the greater one, soon fell to the Assyrians in 722. There remained only the “kingdom of Judah”. A pitiful “kingdom” covering less than one of our small sized Indian districts. In 587, it fell to the Babylonians

and the offspring of Abraham was reduced to an exiled population, running the risk of assimilation to Mesopotamian culture and religion. When the Persian king Cyrus defeated Babylon and gave the exiled peoples freedom to go back and restore their respective countries, it was only a small remnant that returned to the Promised Land, so pathetic a remnant that those who returned could only shed tears at the thought of the past glory (Esd 3:12; 9:3-15; Neh 9:36f).

Yet, the prophets did not just lament over this little remnant. For them, the “remnant” was a dynamic theme.¹ For Isaiah, this remnant, the work of Yahweh (4,4), will rely on God alone (10,20) through faith... The Messiah, the vicar of Yahweh, around whom this remnant will be grouped (19,21), will be both their head and principal glory (4,7). He will represent them.²

Micah sees that little remnant as a “powerful people” (4:7). The ultimate remnant will be the lone person of the Servant, “despised and rejected... struck down by God and afflicted” (Is 53:3f), yet making the multitudes righteous (53:11), “light to the nations that my (God’s) salvation may reach to the ends of the earth” (49:6).

As Israel encountered the nations, first Canaan and the Philistines, then Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, and Persia, it discovered itself as a tiny minority in a vast world. The outcome was not discouragement but a return to the centre, to the God of the covenant calling to conversion. Through the spiritual guidance of the prophets, the people of God become more and more conscious that their strength did not reside in numbers but in the “God-with-us”, light of justice and righteousness.

In this prophetic perspective, ultimately, the love and fidelity of God for his people and the response of the people was the only source of strength. It did not matter whether the offspring of Abraham was great or small. The prophets saw beyond numbers. What mattered was God’s promise and the people’s fidelity to the covenant.

It was not because you were more numerous than any other people that the Lord set his heart on you and chose you – for you were the fewest of all peoples. It was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath that he swore to your ancestors that the lord brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery” (Dt 7:7-8).

1 Cf. F. Dreyfus, “Remannt” in X. Leon-Dufour (ed.), *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 2nd ed., Bangalore: TPI, 1973, 484-6.

2 Ibid., 484-5.

II. Jesus, God of Small Things

The theme of the remnant found a living image in the person of Jesus. The way he goes about his ministry cannot be qualified as a strategy of world conquest. The episode of the temptation illustrates the ambiguity of such a strategy. There could be for Jesus a possibility to acquire the authority on “all the kingdoms of the world”. But it would be a devilish plot and not the way of the Servant (Lk 4:5-7).

In fact, Jesus’ ministry seems to shrink from world-wide prospects. In general, it remains circumscribed within the confines of Palestine. Rarely does he leave the boundaries of Israel. When he does, it is just a few kilometres East to cross the lake of Galilee to find refuge in Pagan Decapolis. To the west a single journey is reported in the “region of Tyre” (Mk 7:24-31). Such moves did not amount to much in mileage.³ In no way could they be compared with the great missionary expeditions of Paul.

Within Palestine itself, most of Jesus’ activity was limited to Galilee and, within Galilee itself, it was largely confined to the northern part of the lake of Galilee, with Capernaum in the centre. This constituted what exegetes call the “evangelical triangle”, a very narrow field indeed with the base of some ten kilometres between Tabgha on the West and Bethsaida in the East.

Social limitations were as striking as the geographical ones. Within limited Galilee, Jesus does not go to the main urban centres. Sepphoris, six kilometres North of Nazareth, was the administrative capital of Roman Galilee. Tiberias on the south-west shore of the lake of Galilee was being rebuilt, adorned and enlarged by Herod Antipas as a tourist centre round its hot water springs. Through the historian Josephus, we know of such other Galilean urban centres as Gischala, Jotapata, Sennabris, Scythopolis. None of these cities are mentioned in the Gospels. The sphere of Jesus was the world of the small rural peasants, dispossessed of their good lands by Roman colonisation and pushed to poor rocky soil on hill sides sphere. It was a world that kept aloof from city aristocracy and the urban developments fostered by Herod Antipas.⁴ The praxis of Jesus did not reflect a military strategy of conquest. It did not consist in occupying the urban strongholds to make them the base for the further occupation of the land. Jesus’ priority

3 Cf. L. Legrand, *Unity and Plurality: Mission in the Bible*, Pune: Ishvani Publications, 1992, 46-48.

4 See S. Freyne, Galilee, *Jesus and the Gospels: Literary Approaches and Historical Investigations*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988; R.A. Horsley, *Archaeology*,

was just to proclaim the Good news, to reflect the love of the Father for the poor, in his life, action and prayer.

In his “strategic” option – if the word “strategy” can be applied to so disinterested a stand – Jesus was the God of small things. He exercised his healing power in favour of the little ones, the outcast of society, lepers, blind, lame, deaf and dumb, rejected woman. Even John the Baptist in his jail “took offence: Was it not a waste of messianic power to devote the God given gifts and mission to such insignificant people? Jesus had to remind him that such was the messianic strategy announced by the prophets (Mt 11:2-6 quoting Is 29:18;33:5f; 61:1).

His language as well was the language of the little ones. His parable refer mostly to the humble realities of the daily life of the common folk: sowing and fishing, cooking and stitching patches, salt and leaven, sheep and goats, fig trees and vineyards. They reflect the life of the daily wage earners, of poor women for whom the loss of a coin is a disaster. Jesus’ parables are not set in the place of the kings, they emerge from the subculture of Galilean conquest plans. He is the Messiah of the poor, the one who perceives the advent of God and of His rule in the humble pattern of the life of the smallest.

Born as a babe in a crib, he ends his messianic career on a cross. The few feet span of the Cross is his ultimate mission field. It is from there that he will save the world because salvation consists in discovering the power of God’s love in the least glorious aspects of human existence, even in death and in the shameful death of the cross. The Cross-stands as a reminder that the power of God resides in the weakness of the Servant who makes himself fragile out of love. Whether in situation of a majority or a minority, the authenticity and the power of the Christian mission is not to be gauged by numbers or dominant position but by transparency to God’s kenotic love and fidelity to the standard of the Cross.

III. Paul, Apostle to the Nations?

It may be said that the strategy of Jesus was reversed by the resurrection. In the resurrection, what Jesus of Nazareth stood for was universalised and now there could ring the command to go to all the Nations (Mt 28:19; Mk 16:15), to extend the Christian witness to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

History and Society in Galilee: The Social Context of Jesus and the Rabbis, Valley Forge: Trinity Press, 1996; L. Legrand, *The Bible on Culture. Belonging or Dissenting?*, New York: Orbis Books, 2000, 97-112.

This is certainly true. But even so, it should be noted that, in Mt 28:19, “the twelve were sent out not to conquer the world but to win disciples.”⁵

It is interesting to see how the universalistic command of the Risen Lord was understood by Paul, “apostle to the Nations”. He was deeply conscious of having been “set apart to reveal (the Son of God) among the Nations” (Gal 1:15). He felt the urge to proclaim the Good News as a kind of physical need (1 Cor 9:16; 1 Thes 2:2-8). He adopted a planned urban strategy targeting the main administrative, cultural and economic centres of the Mediterranean world. The names of Antioch, Ephesus, Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth, Rome constitute a kind of summary of Greek and Roman history.

Yet they were not the only great cities of the then known world. With a population of about one million, Alexandria of Egypt was as big as Rome. Seleucia on the Tigris had a population of six lakhs. Palmyra, doura-Europos, Ctesiphon were other important cities and commercial centres. Beyond the Tigris, Susa and Ecbatana were also well known metropolises, not to speak of India which was also part of the geographical horizon of the Mediterranean citizen. In fact, Asia and Africa in their totality remained outside the scope of Paul’s apostolic campaign. Presumably, the east and the south, more deeply penetrated by the Jewish diaspora, belonged to the area entrusted to the “‘apostles of the Circumcision”, Peter and his companions, according to Gal 2:6-9.

Paul was the apostle of the west. But in the west, Paul did not go to such important areas as Sicily, North Italy, North Africa (Carthage!), Gauls and Germany, still less Britain. Even if we are to presume that he could realise his plans to go to Spain (Rom 15:24.28), Paul’s strategy did not cover the whole of Europe. His strategy seems to have been a straight *Drang nach Westen*, a thrust to the west, aiming at the “Pillars of the Hercules”, the straits of Gibraltar, where the primordial ocean stretched its indefinite expanses until the depths of the setting Sun. But he left out vast expanses of the European continent the existence of which the Apostle could not have ignored. If so, how could he claim to have “fully proclaimed the Good News of Jesus Christ” (Rom 15:19) and consider that there was “no further place for me) in these regions” (Rom 15:23)? Even in the areas which he had covered, he knew quite well that he had not brought the entire population of the cities to Christianity. In the midst of the great cities of the Mediterranean world, the Christian communities of Thessalonica, Corinth, Rome formed small minority

5 G. Mangatt, *Jesus the Good News*, Kottayam: St Thomas Apostolic Seminary, 1998, 61.

groups of a few hundred people. In Athens, it was still less: the disciples of Jesus could easily be listed and counted on the fingers of the hand (Acts 17:34). As for the villagers of the surrounding districts, the *pagani*, they were left untouched till the time of Constantine, several centuries later.

It is clear that Paul and the other apostles “thought in representative terms... without counting noses”⁶ and that “this representative missionary method... restricted itself to the main centres”⁷, and selected centres at that. Paul’s purpose was not to convert the world: that he left to God. He did not seem to have been overanxious to gather every single inhabitant of the world in the Christian fold. His aim was to cast in the word “the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God” (2 Cor 4:4). His letters show his eagerness to have the Christian communities radiant centres of lived faith, “with unveiled faces, mirroring the glory of the Lord” (2 Cor 3:18). Like Jesus, Paul would have said: “I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled” (Lk 12:49). But his role was to be the spark. Then fire was to burn by itself. He echoed the words of Jesus: “You are the light of the world” (Mt 5:14). “You are people of light and not of darkness... Put on the weapons of light... You are the light in the Lord, live as children of light”, he told the believers in various Churches (1 Thes 5:5; Rom 3:12; Eph 5:8). The precision is to be noted: they are light “in the Lord”: the light is the Lord himself. The challenge to the communities is to be as transparent as possible, thick vessels of clay as they are (2 Cor 4:7), to the light shining on the face of Christ (2 Cor 4:6). Light must shine and fill the house (Mt 5:14f). But this does not mean that the whole room must turn into a flaming torch.

This transparency to the light of Christ was to be realised by the kenotic experience of weakness. The power of the Gospel may manifest itself in “signs and prodigies” (Rom 15:19) but still more by the force of impact of the Gospel itself (Rom 1:16) and that in a context of deeply felt human weakness and inadequacy (2 Cor 12:9f). Never does Paul rely on numbers and influence to spread the Gospel. On the contrary, as he says: “I would rather all the more and gladly boast of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me... For when I am weak then I am strong” (2 Cor 12:8.10). This was already the significance of the cross, power of God in weakness (1 Cor 1:23f). It remains the heart of the Church’s mission all through the centuries.

6 E.P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law and the Jewish People*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983, 189.

7 D. Zeller, *Der Brief an die Römer*, RNT, Regensburg: Pustet, 1984, 242.

Conclusion

The conclusion can be given in the words of Jesus himself:

"Do not be afraid, little flock" (Lk 12:32). Whether it be the Old Testament prophets, Jesus or Paul, they did not think in terms of majority domination. The minority situation of the 'small remnant' did not appear anomalous to them. For them, it was not a basic problem which had to be remedied as a first priority.

"Strive for the kingdom of God, and the other things will be given to you as well" says Jesus in the immediate preceding context (Lk 12:31). The rest can be wealth, welfare, or in collective terms, great number and influence. It is the "rest" given over and above, not the priority. The essential is the "reign of God". The reign of God means what Jesus revealed, not a despotic manifestation of might but the prevalence of love over violence, of self-surrender in sacrifice over self-centredness. It means the spirit of the Beatitudes, having the same mind as the One who did not cling to his dignity but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant... to the point of death, even on a cross (Phil 2:6-8).

The rulers of the nations lord it over them and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you. Whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your servant, just as the Son of man came not be served but to serve and to give his life as ransom for many (Mt 20:24-28).

God knows no other power than that of this sacrificial love. There cannot be any other priority. The rest belongs to God who acts over and above, success or failure, as he wills, where and when he wills, according to his mysterious plans.

Does this mean that the Mission will lose its urgency, that the workers in the fields will go without motivation? On the contrary, neither the prophets nor Jesus nor Paul showed any inferiority complex about belonging to or representing the little remnant. They were certainly not lacking in motivation! "The very spring of our cautions is the love of Christ for us" (2 Cor 5:14).⁸ Can there be more urging motivation?

Minority situations have a kenotic value. As in the case of Paul, realisation of our weakness takes us to the "deeper springs" of our action, to the Spirit who is ultimately the "primary agent of the Mission"⁹. This return to the

8 According to J.B. Phillips translation.

centre, to the power of the Spirit results in the true power of the Gospel.

It sustains our patience: The Spirit, like the wind, “blows where he wills” (Jn 3:8). What we consider success or failure comes when and where he wills. Most often in his own unpredictable ways.

It strengthens our courage and confidence: God gives the Spirit without measure (Jn 3:38) and the Spirit cannot fail.

It widens our horizons. God has filled the world with his Spirit (Wis 1:7). “His presence and activity affects not only individuals but also society and history, peoples, cultures and religions.”¹⁰ The Mission is not unilateral gift of the Gospel. It is also ever-renewed encounter with the Spirit at work in the world. Even when in a tiny minority, the disciples of Christ, in the Spirit, find themselves continuously surrounded and supported by the immense people of all those who are moved by the Spirit of God.

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9 John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter Redemptoris Missio*, 24.

10 *Ibid.*, 28.

Christians Amidst Other Communities

Felix Wilfred

This article is an attempt to explore new ways of forging relationships of Christians with other communities. With this in mind, the author shows that what others have learnt from Jesus and the Gospel far surpasses in effect what Christians have succeeded to convey. Moreover, the impact of Christianity on India and Asia at large, has been through indirect ways than direct ones. Basing on these two premises, the article presents some trajectories for strengthening and deepening the relationship with other communities in evolving new socio-political context. He concludes saying that it is the nature and quality of the relationship of Christians with other communities which will tell whether we are Indian or alien.

In studying the nature of the Christian communities in the Asian societies, I have been struck by three views coming from three persons of very different backgrounds and experiences. According to Jacques Gernet, a French scholar, there is a basic incompatibility between the Christian vision and ideals and the Asian (Chinese) ones.¹ That should explain, according to him, the “failure” of Christianity in the Asian continent. For Susaku Endo, the Japanese novelist, Christianity in Asia (Japan) is like a plant implanted in a marshy field; it does not strike roots; instead its roots get rotten. The Indian Ambassador- historian K.M.Panikkar has analyzed in detail the nature of the Christian presence and activity in India, and holds that it is the arrogance of Christianity which contributed to the limited outcome of Christian mission disproportionate to the energy and resources invested during the time of missionary expansion.²

1 Jacques Gernet, *China and the Christian Impact*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987.

2 K.M.Panikkar, *Asia and Western Dominance*, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 1954.

In analyzing why this situation of Christian community, we cannot but highlight the fact that, by and large, Christianity has tried to underline *what distinguishes it from others; what marks off the Christians from the rest of the people*. Is it not now the time to get back to the central Gospel message of universal love? It has been atrophied by the isolationist attitude and weighed down by a heap of ideas and concepts. Hence the task of the Christian community amidst other communities is to learn to forge new relationships with its neighbours, and let the universal message of love flow freely in the blood-stream of the society. We need to develop in Asia a *language of relationships and a pedagogy of encounter* which are extremely important at this moment.

The flourishing of the Christian community in India and Asia at large will be measured by the quality and depth of the relationships it will forge with other communities. The identity-consciousness of the Christian community is not, then, a matter of withdrawal and seclusion from others, but a consciousness of being bound up intimately with the people and communities all around. The new century will be one in which we will deepen and strengthen the relationships with our neighbours .

To be able to enter into new relationships with other communities in the spirit of openness, it is important to realize that, often even without our noticing, the person of Jesus and the Gospel have already touched our neighbours in various forms and at different levels. This needs to be taken into serious account, since they show us the inscrutable ways in which the person of Jesus and the message of the Gospel draw the hearts and minds of the people. We may have our own plans, but these plans are often undone by the magnetism of the cross that pulls: "When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men to me" (Jn 12:32). Scanning through the history of the Christian community in India and Asia at large, we may notice that the most decisive influence of Jesus and the Gospel on the country and the continent has been through *informal ways* than through formal ones; more through *indirect ways* than through direct ones.

In understanding the relationship of Christian communities with other communities in the country we need to be aware of true important facts.

First,, *what our neighbours of other religious traditions have of themselves learnt from Jesus and from the Gospel has had much more and lasting influence in the life of the country than what the Christian community has achieved by preaching the Gospel.*

Second, if we take the Christian community itself, what it has contributed *indirectly* to various areas of life in the country – the social, cultural, literary etc. – has had greater effect than the results that followed through its preaching. In all these *indirect ways*, there has taken place already an encounter of the spirit of the Gospel with India.

These two facts are as well indicators for the future direction of the relationship of Christians with other communities. In other words, the Christian community needs to ask how it could *create an appropriate environment for our neighbours to learn from the universal message of the Gospel*. Secondly, the Christian community should study in the changed circumstances of today the indirect ways through which the vision of the Gospel and its spirit could animate the life in the society at various levels.

While, the incidents of attack on Christians and Christian institutions in recent times may weigh heavily on us, and the temptation may be strong to take an aggressive and apologetic posture to counter such moves, we should not lose the perspective of the whole. It is the time to pause and build bridges of relationships and not precipitately snap the ties; it is the time to reach out more than ever, and not to withdraw into a self-imposed isolation.

This essay, in its first part, attempts to highlight some of the ways in which the person of Jesus and the Gospel have found a place in the life of our neighbours and of the society.³ That would serve as a launching pad to reflect on the future trajectory of the relationship of Christians with other communities, which would form the second section of this article.

Part I : The Influence of Jesus and the Gospel

1. The Impact on Significant Persons

There have been numerous persons in the history of India who came under the spell of the Gospel which had its effect through them in the country among millions of people. Let me highlight, by way of example, three personalities – one each from political, religious and social fields.

It is common knowledge that Gandhi, the key-figure in the political life of the country, saw in Jesus someone who embodied the ideal he was seeking to promote all along – the *satyagraha*. The quest for truth, according to Gandhi, was indissolubly linked up with the practice of non-violence. The

3 There is no attempt to be exhaustive. Further, due to lack of space, I have limited the references to the minimum.

Sermon on the Mount was the epitome of the highest ideals humanity ought to live by. Its fascination on him made Gandhi state that even if there were no historical figure as Jesus, he is *real*, because there is the Sermon on the Mount. For him Sermon on the Mount was “the Christianity yet to be lived”.

The practice of *satyagraha* and *ahimsa* call for a life of *tapasya* and acceptance of suffering. Herein he sees the central importance of the cross. The voluntary acceptance of suffering has the great potential of giving life. Rather than inflicting suffering on others, bearing in oneself the suffering brings the transformation of the one who inflicts suffering. Cross may have been a scandal for the Jews and foolishness for the Greeks (I Cor. I:23), but for Gandhi cross is an inspiring symbol of wisdom. For, the life of individuals as well as groups could be moulded and shaped only by going through the crucible of agony and suffering.

What Gandhi was to the political life of India, Ramakrishna Paramahansa has been to the religious life of contemporary India. No single person has affected the religious soul of India in modern time as he did. Yet, it is a fact that this great mystic was an illiterate person. He had the Bible read by Jadu Mallick, a Hindu devotee of Jesus Christ. Ramakrishna claimed that he had an intense mystical experience of Jesus, and that he was possessed by Jesus. He saw Christianity as a *sadhana* or path, and hence as an experiential reality. Ramakrishna who was known for his stories and parables drawn from daily life, spoke of all those who reduce God and religion to a set of concepts as those counting the leaves in a mango-grove, instead of savouring the delicious mangoes. Vivekananda, the great disciple of Ramakrishna not only saw in Jesus a true *jivanmukta*, but also was struck by the Christian spirit and practice of service. It inspired him to initiate organized humanitarian work in the Hindu tradition.

The third personality, who represents the social arena of the country, is Jotirao Phule, who was a *shudra*. The modern upsurge of the backward castes and classes and the ferment for social transformation derive from him. Phule came under the influence of the Gospel and Christianity. His association from student days with the missionaries, led him to realize Jesus' fundamental message of equality of all human beings, with God as the common Father. He dedicated his life to the realization of this ideal in the concrete circumstances. It is this perspective and practice that led him also to project an inclusive vision of the nation based on equality – a vision

which echoes the Gospel message of equality and concern for the last and the least:

There cannot be a 'nation' worth the name until and unless all the people of the land of King Bali, such as the Shudras, Bhils and fishermen, etc. become truly educated and are able to think independently for themselves and are uniformly unified and emotionally integrated.⁴

Such an egalitarian programme implied also a re-reading of the Indian classics from the perspective of those discriminated against. It is the same message of equality which led him to found a society of truth-seekers (*satyashodhaka samaja*) and to involve himself for the education of the lower castes. He believed that it is education that will bring about the emancipation of the lower castes and classes. He was very much committed to the cause of women and their upliftment, which he tried to effect through education. In fact the very first school for girls started in Pune in 1851 was the work of Phule.

2. The Gospel and Indian Renaissance

For India, the nineteenth century was the time of re-awakening. Under the experience of colonialism there began an introspection on the overall state of the country and the turmoil it was going through. It dawned upon some of the enlightened group of Indians that the country needed urgent religious and social reform. The reforms that were urgently called for were spearheaded by Ram Mohan Roy, the Father of Indian modernity, and by the *Brahmo Samaj* he founded in 1828.⁵ As is well-known Mohan Roy fought against *sati*, child-marriage and other social evils. It is significant that Roy drew inspiration from the Gospel for the social reform and even wrote a little booklet on the "The Precepts of Jesus". In a spirit of openness he held debate with the missionaries. Brahmosamaj believed in dialogue and mutual learning, and it thought that a meeting with Christianity and Christian ideals could bring about the needed changes in India and revitalize the society. Mohan Roy was constantly in dialogue with the Unitarians and when he died in England in 1833, it was a Unitarian – Lant Carpenter - who preached the funeral oration extolling him and his work of reform.

4 As quoted in Gail Omvedt, *Dalits and the Democratic Revolution*, Sasge Publications, Delhi, 1994, p.97.

5 Cfr David Kopf, *The Brahmo Samaj and the Shaping of the Modern Indian Mind*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1979; M.M. Thomas, *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance*, C.L.S., Madras, 1976, pp. 1ff.

Evidently, the Renaissance initiated by Mohan Roy did not have any mass appeal, and could not galvanize millions of people as later day nationalist movement did. Nevertheless, the seeds of change were sown and it is significant that at this embryonic stage there was an encounter of India with the Gospel through some of the most enlightened people in the Brahmo Samaj as Keshub Chunder Sen and P.C. Majumdar. Sen spoke about Asiatic Christ and Majumdar had a book on *The Oriental Christ*. The regeneration of India envisaged by such stalwarts were universalist in spirit and this favoured a fruitful meeting with Christianity and Christian ideals. Later, the regeneration of India came to be narrowed down and seen more through a sectarian perspective.

The influence of Christianity in the early stage of Indian Renaissance was also through the liberal and democratic principles of Christian inspiration. In fact, some of the reformers took a distance from a narrow religious approach and looked at the problem of the country and its revitalization from a humanistic perspective. In this regard, the opposition of the early reformers to caste derived not so much from religious consideration, but from the fact that it inhibited the emergence of a society along free and democratic lines.⁶ In all this, if we may not exaggerate the place of the Gospel and its influence - since many other factors and forces were involved in the Renaissance – nor may we undermine its indirect influence through secular channels. If in some instances more pronounced influence of Christianity could be discerned, in other instances, Christianity *occasioned* a fresh consciousness about regeneration of India, as we could observe, for example, in the debates Mohan Roy had with the missionaries of his times. It was occasioned also in another sense: As K.Nataraj, the editor of the *Indian Social Reformer*, once admitted, “the fear of the Christian missionary has been the beginning of much wisdom among us”⁷. (!)

3. Mediation of Modernity for the Depressed Groups

The upper classes and castes reaped rich benefits from the modern means such as the new educational policy pursued by the colonial government. It is also they who assumed position of leadership in various sectors of the life of the country. However, millions of people remained

6 Cfr Bipan Chandra et al., *India's Struggle for Independence*, Viking, Delhi, 1989, p. 89.

7 As quoted in Charles Heimsath, *Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1964, p.53.

under the thrall of discrimination and oppression. We need to single out the dalits and the tribals of India. It is a fact that Christianity through its institutions helped to implement the new educational policy and made the field of higher education accessible to the upper castes and classes. It is also a fact that, no less effort was devoted to the cause of the marginal groups and communities.⁸

The Christian contribution in this field needs to be placed in the larger framework of the emergence of backward class movements and tribal movements in the country from the middle of nineteenth century and its progressive assertion through the twentieth century. The missionaries did succour to these underprivileged people, specially in times of famine and disaster. But what outweighs all such material helps was the *self-confidence* they infused in the dalits and tribals. We may recall here, by way of example, Fr Constantine Lievens and his work among the tribals of Chotanagpur.

In a situation where groups like dalits and women were excluded from knowledge, the missionaries strained to bring literacy to them, in spite of violent opposition from the upper castes. In many places the mission-stations had centers for the primary education of the poor classes. By way of example, we may refer here to the educational efforts of Protestant missionaries in the princely state of Travancore.⁹ All these efforts cumulatively led to a sharper social and political consciousness among, at least, some sections of the depressed classes. For several marginalized groups, the Christian involvement *facilitated the access to modernity*. It naturally led to a critical scrutiny of the past. The mediation of modernity was very important also because it challenged ascriptive identities such as caste and opened up a free space for the emergence of the depressed groups.

All this assumes significance against the backdrop of a situation in which the upper castes and classes attempted to exclude them from modernity and left them to fend for themselves. Further, it was important that the modern legal practice in which all are held to be equal before the law bore the Christian

8 See the most recent research on the issue: J.C. Ingleby, *Missionaries, Education and India*, ISPCK, Delhi, 2000.

9 Cfr D.Kooiman, *Conversion and Social Equality in India. The LMS in South Travancore in the Nineteenth Century*, Manohar, Delhi, 1989; Koji Kawashima, *Missionaries and a Hindu State: Travancore 1858 – 1936*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998.

influence. Today, thanks to numerous factors, the traditionally marginalized groups are becoming significant forces in the modern political and economic process of the country. Nationalism without modernity for *all* its peoples could become a dangerous obscurantist force. It is but a pseudo-nationalism. Genuine nationalism needs to go hand in hand with access to the positive benefits offered by modernity. In this sense, the Christian engagement with the depressed groups could be viewed as a contribution to a fuller understanding of nationalism.

4. Historicization of Pluralism

By helping to bring the marginalized to the center-stage of the national politics, Christianity has at the same time contributed to a concrete historical face to pluralism. It is well-known that pluralism is a much-cherished ideal in the indic civilization. The ethnic, linguistic and regional diversity represented in India has been viewed as great richness of the country. Often, however, pluralism remains an ideal requiring historical concretization. This is so because the question of *power* intervenes in the difficult process of bonding together the diverse peoples and groups represented in the country. The contemporary aggressive efforts of homogenizing the Indian culture to the advantage of the dominant is a crucial issue we face. Even when diversity is admitted, there is refusal to draw the practical consequences. Instead, diversity is often framed within an order of hierarchy controlled and manipulated by the powerful.

The missionaries contributed to unfold the differences persisting among the various racial, linguistic and religious groups. Highlighting the differences is a contribution to the richness of India as a composite culture, and may not be construed as being anti-national. The latter would be the case if India were to be viewed from the perspective of a cultural homogenization. An example may clarify what I am trying to say. Some of the missionaries went into a deeper study of the various Indian languages and their structures, which led the particular groups to become aware of their own rich linguistic heritage. The most evident case is that of Tamil, whose morphological study, curiously, was a turning point in the political history of India. Though may sound academic, the investigation into the linguistic structure led to the discovery of the "*Dravidian*" in the Indian civilization. This was done by the Scottish missionary bishop Caldwell. In his seminal work, "A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South Indian Family of Languages" (1856), Caldwell showed how the Dravidian languages cannot be grouped

with Sanskrit but form a distinct group going back to a great antiquity.¹⁰ This study along with other important works of missionaries went to form the *intellectual background of the Dravidian movement*,¹¹ ushering in an era of a plural identity in the country. The Dravidian served as a paradigm for the emergence of other identities and affirmation of difference and plurality as part of the contemporary political process.

5. Study of Indian Society and Culture

Yet, another indirect way in which Christianity exerted influence over the country was through many systematic studies of the society and culture of the country. European Enlightenment is credited with the impulse it gave to the West into thorough investigation of the reality in its various branches of knowledge. As for India, there were two principal agents who engaged themselves in the study of the Indian society, albeit for different motives: They were the colonial administrators, for whom it was important to have a detailed study of the people they governed. For missionaries, the study of the society in which they felt called to fulfil their sacred mission. But often, as it happened, it was their study of the society which exerted lasting influence on the country than that mission to which they thought their study was a means. There were certainly many distortions and not a few misunderstanding of the Indian society and culture by the missionaries. Nevertheless, the pioneering work they did served as fund of informations as well as pointers for further study and investigation.

To form an idea of the influence wielded by such studies, let me recall here that the book of the French Foreign Missionary, Abbé Dubois "*Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*" has seen several editions and reprints up to our times. The observations of the daily lives of the people and their rites represent a precious record in the study of the Indian society. Some of the early missionaries went into a sympathetic study of Hinduism as for example the well-known Danish missionary Ziegenbalg who wrote the *Genealogy of the Malabar Gods*.¹²

10 Cfr K. Meenakshisundaram, *The Contribution of European Scholars to Tamil*, University of Madras, 1974.

11 Cfr E.F. Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India. The Non-Brahmin Movement and Tamil Separatism 1916 - 1929*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1969.

12 The missionaries who studied Hindu tradition were caught between two completely opposing reactions. They experienced resistance on the part of the missionary

I already referred to the crucial importance the study of Tamil by the missionaries for the emergence of Dravidian political movement. Besides that, we need to add the innumerable works done by them in the advancement of the regional languages of India. The spectrum extends from establishment of printing presses in the regional languages and translation of some of the classic works into European languages to complex lexicography through introduction of new literary genre and writing of grammar. By way of example, we may recall here the works of Constantine Beschi to Tamil, of Arnos Padri to Malayalam, of the Serampore missionary William Carey to Bengali. There have been as well very valuable contributions to the development of the tribal languages. This latter point is particularly important, since the consciousness of their language contributed also to gaining of self-confidence among the tribals.

Part II: Future Trajectories

To sum up the first part, our neighbours have learnt all along and continue to learn even today much from Jesus and allow themselves to be inspired by the message of the Gospel. Secondly, there have been numerous indirect ways which the Christian agents such as the missionaries thought were simply means, but which, in practice, were more effective in bringing into the society the spirit of Jesus and the Gospel. What this indicates is that the future of the Christian community amidst other communities need to be built on this ground, and not on ideas and practices which isolate the Christians from the neighbouring communities. This needs to be said in view of many ideas in circulation among some Christians and office-holders in the Church, which are apt to turn the Christian community into a fundamentalist or semi-fundamentalist group.

Without any claim to comprehensiveness, I would like to highlight five pointers which may help to strengthen the bonds of relationship of the Christian community with other communities

1. Completing an Unfinished Agenda

Christianity could help bring to completion the Renaissance of India that

societies which sent them, because these studies were viewed as compromising with “heathenism”, whereas criticism from some quarters in India is leveled against them for their misunderstanding and misrepresentation of Hinduism. On this polarity, cfr D.H.-W.Gensichen, “Daring to Know. The Contribution of Christian Missionaries to the Understanding of Hinduism, 1550 – 1850”, in *Indian Church History Review*, vol. XX, No. 2 (December 1986), pp. 83 – 103.

started in the beginning of nineteenth century. As I see it, the Indian Renaissance was characterized by two major orientations: On the one hand was the conviction that the Indian society could be renewed by an earnest and open encounter with other cultures and religious traditions. This stream was represented by the Brahmo Samaj whose members were very much fascinated by Christianity and what it had to offer. But, due to various factors which included the lack of openness on the part of some missionaries, this movement was debilitated and almost vanished.

A second trend was represented by the thought that Indian society could and should be renewed through its own resources and its rich heritage. The Arya Samaj which is representative of this orientation, found in the Vedas the answer to the maladies of India. It is this trend which slowly led to a fundamentalist position and served as ammunition for a religiously oriented nationalism.

Now, both these trends remained reformist. They lacked *radicality*. Neither of them challenged the social structures which left a large part of the Indian population out of the purview of the projected regeneration of India. The regeneration and renaissance of India is meant for *all* its peoples. The emergence of dalit and tribal movements is a very important development in the direction of *an inclusive and integral nationalism*. Here precisely lies an important task for Christianity. It needs to be in solidarity with these movements and commit itself for the well-being of such marginalized groups. The solidarity and support to these movements may not be construed as anti-national. On the contrary, any such support is to be viewed as promoting a *substantive nationalism*, in contrast to a formal nationalism. It is an effort towards a more complete Renaissance of India.

2. From Shudra to the Spirit of Servanthood

For the people of good will in the country the dominant image of Christians is that of a community involved in service. Care for the poor, the sick and the destitute done with much dedication by the numerous Christian institutions have all along drawn the attention of other communities. Now, what has happened is that people have come to *expect* from Christianity this type of service. Service is something which is enjoined by Jesus to his disciples, and rightly Christian community is involved in works of service. However, in a hierarchically-ordered caste-society, service has other connotations. In the caste-order, each caste has its own duty (*varnadhharma*) which it is supposed to perform. Service is a specialized role of the shudra,

just like the Brahmin and Kshatrya have their roles to perform in the society. Within the caste-frame, Christians would be viewed as the *collective shudra*; the relationship of Christians to other communities would be viewed as one of a humble and serving shudra to other castes.

Service, surely must be done. But the point is that the Christian community should do more. The future of the country requires the spirit of servanthood among all the segments of people, independent of caste or religious affiliation. What is required is the fostering of a general spirit of servanthood in the country. In what ways Christians could contribute in contemporary circumstances to the emergence of the spirit of servanthood is something the community needs to ponder over and translate into action. In this way, the Christian community will create a climate for our neighbours to learn from the Gospel.

3. 'Flesh – the Hinge of Salvation'

In the face of the many attacks in recent times, the thought of an average Christian might go something like this: "After all we Christians are doing a lot of good things; we are working for the poor, the dalits and the well-being of tribals. How come that these works are not appreciated; instead we have become targets of attack." There are evidently political reasons for this state of affairs. But we need to look at the whole issue also from another perspective which would lead to a self-critique of the Christian community and help forge better relationships with other communities in the future.

Reading and researching through many documents and studying the reactions of critical Hindus vis a vis the missionaries, I am struck by the basic continuity in the nature of their critique. One critique which could be noticed from the middle of nineteenth century to our day is that, though the missionaries are doing good work, they do it *for some other motive*; their concern with the material condition of the people is with reference to *something else*; their involvement with the physical conditions and the material basis of life is only a means and instrument. There is a wide spectrum of critiques from very mild to vigorous and militant ones as we find for example among those inspired by the Hindutva ideology.

Here is a very crucial point for the future relationship of Christian community with other communities. We are led to reflect also theologically on the issue. The material conditions of life are real and their presence and absence is inextricably related to salvation. A well-known maxim in the Christian tradition says: *caro cardo salutis* – the flesh is the hinge of

salvation. It has obvious reference to the mystery of incarnation in its relation to human salvation. The physical condition and the material basis of life like food, drink, shelter, education, security, health, etc. have value in themselves. Anyone a little familiar with the way God's creation is viewed in the Scriptures and views these material realities in the light of incarnation, will note that they are integral to human wholeness and salvation. Therefore, any attitude and practice that views them simply as *instrumental* will not be truly Christian. Hence the critique of our neighbours in this regard should be a starting point to rethink an instrumental approach from the very Christian point of view.

Let me explain with an example. We take the issue of children. If we look at them from the perspective of God's creation we will see them as an end in themselves. But when this basic approach is absent, and we are concerned about children *because* we are worried about how they are *catechized*, then there creeps in an instrumental view. Not that concern about catechesis is unimportant. It has a place and legitimacy. But more basic and foundational is *the reality of the children* who are an end in themselves. This should get reflected in any involvement with the issue of children. The same thing could be said of the dalits and tribals or any other group.

Now, if the Christian community critically reviews itself in the light of the Scriptural understanding of creation and incarnation, there is bound to be a radical transformation in its approach, and consequently in its relationship to other communities. Further, such an approach will put Christians in a position of collaboration with other groups and communities because there is ample possibility of sharing together common concerns which have an end in themselves. This can bind together the Christian community with other communities - something which may not happen when the issue of dalits, tribals, children or women is taken up in view of something else by the Christian community.

4. Active Participation in Civil Society

In a democratic country like India, the issue of minorities looms large in the minds of the Christians and their leadership. The minority issue has become so central in the consciousness and practice of the Christian community that one gets the impression that all relationships of Christians to other communities is reduced to this one single question. It has absorbed the minds of many Church-leaders to such an extent that they become myopic to many crucial issues affecting the nation and the various communities represented in it. For example, during the Emergency period when the former

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi assumed absolutist powers, gross violation of human rights was taking place all over the country. The press was muzzled and the civil space was invaded. But, curiously and not surprisingly, at the height of Emergency, when many Christian leaders met the Prime Minister or presented memoranda to the state, it was *a thanksgiving for having protected the minority rights* of the Christian community. Many crucial issues affecting the nation and shared by the different communities did not seem to make any difference.

Even today basically the relationship of the Christian community to the rest of the country seems to be a matter of relationship with the state and is centered around the issue of minorities. It is a *vertical relationship*. It has certainly a place in the complex political process of the country. My submission is that it is indispensable in future that the Christian community cultivates a *horizontal relationship* with other communities. While acknowledging that minority rights are Constitutional, to rely solely on the protection of minority rights by the state and expect to be pampered by the state can mar the horizontal relationship Christian community needs to build up with other communities.

It is not only for the pragmatic reason that the relationship of one community to the state affects all other communities; more basic and important is that a climate of mutual understanding and confidence be built up among the different communities of the nation. This should take place at all levels, and not confined to simply the sphere of religion. For the cultivation of such horizontal relationships with other communities, the civil space is open. Civil society is the space where people meet, interact, discourse and form opinion on different issues.¹³ A fruitful meeting of the Christian community with others would cement deeper relationships, remove a lot of misunderstanding, and mutual misrepresentations. Active participation in the civil space can also prevent the invading of it by fundamentalist forces.

5. Pilgrims on the Ethical Path

For millennia, people have looked up to religion for practical guidance of life. The complexity of the contemporary situation puts the religion in a challenging position to respond to the moral issues of our times. One such issue facing our country is the inter-relationship among the various communities and groups – ethnic, linguistic, regional, religious, etc. Religions

13 See my recent work: Felix Wilfred, *Asian Dreams and Christian Hope. At the Dawn of the Millennium*, ISPCK, Delhi, 2000.

themselves have, unfortunately, become sources of conflict, instead of being forces of communion. There has come about a lot of skepticism regarding their ethical credentials. We note today that *the traditional ethical role of religion is being taken over by new social movements* – movements for human rights, for sustainable environment, emancipation of women, dalits, tribals, and so on. These movements represent concrete ethical responses to the present-day challenges. For, they reflect some of the basic values and ideals indispensable for the life of the society and for inter-group relationships.

Against the above sketched background, the contribution Christianity could make is to be part of the newly developing moral universe through the mediation of social movements. By being active partners in these movements, Christians will become also pilgrims with others on the ethical path. In this process, Christians will be able to bring in the rich heritage of the Gospel to interact with the concerns of the various communities in the nation. This in turn will deepen the relationship of Christianity with other communities.

The contemporary ethical task in India is a very challenging one. For, we are faced with many situations of contradictions in areas such as caste, class, culture, politics, economy. A wholesome and humane future could be built up only when these contradictions are faced as ethical issues. This requires joint and concerted effort on the part of all those who are concerned about people. Here the Christian participation will be very timely and appropriate. But, what is happening today is that, instead of trying to resolve the existing contradictions, the concrete Christian praxis, unwittingly, aggravates and strengthens the contradictions.

Let me explain the matter with an example. Underlying contradictions have come to the surface with the progressive assertion of dalits, tribals and others. In this situation, what we observe is that Christianity while coming to the aid of the marginalized groups through social and economic means, it is simultaneously supporting the upper castes and classes through its many educational institutions. It means that on the one hand, support is given to those who are subjugated and marginalized, and at the same time there is a strengthening of the already powerful. At this juncture, Christianity instead of aggravating the contradictions in the society, needs to make, in the spirit of the Gospel, clear moral choices and options which can contribute to effectively transform the present situation by overcoming the present contradictions.

Conclusion

The nature of the inter-relationship of the Christian community with other communities in the country that needs to undergo a radical transformation. Being a Christian is not a matter of isolation, but essentially a reality of relationships. A parallel can be drawn with the conception of person. Elsewhere, a person is defined as someone who is distinct from others with his or her autonomy. In India and Asia at large a person is defined primarily in terms of the cords of relationships with which one is bound. We do not begin to describe a person in the first place as someone who has qualities which others do not have. Rather we see a person as the daughter of so and so, the brother-in-law of so and so, the grand-niece of so and so. This chain of relationships and the particular configuration in the network of connections tells us about the person. What is said of the individuals is applicable as well to the relationship among communities.

There is another important consideration to make. Identities are overlapping. This is also the case with Christians. An Indian Christian shares many other identities in his or her life in the country and other communities. These identities are not to be made light of. For, it is these various identities which he or she shares with others are the ones by which his or her own identity is formed.

A very important ingredient in this process of identity-formation is the perception of others regarding Christianity. In this regard we saw how others by themselves have learnt more from the Gospel than what the Christian community has been trying to say about it. Further, what has been done through indirect means has had lasting effect on other communities and the nation at large. What this tells us is that the starting point for our relationship with other communities need not be always what we have to tell others. If we understand relationship and communication as a mutual process, we should also realize that the starting point for the mutual relationship of Christians and other communities could be most aptly furnished by the partner communities in the nation as well. This is something which we need to explore further.

I think all this will bring about a new and different perspective for approaching such delicate and controversial issues as the minorities or the involvement of Christianity with the marginalized groups. This will also lead to a change in the perception of Christianity as something alien. It is not by apologetically defending that “Christians are Indians” that

relationship with other communities is built up. What is claimed cannot be proved by any apologetic of this type while maintaining a self-isolationist attitude and practice. *It is the nature and quality of relationship we build up with our neighbours that will tell whether the Christian community is Indian, or alien.* This relationship is to be built up, among other things, through joint ethical options and moral choices which will go to strengthen the bonds among the various communities subsumed in the Indian polity. Fortunately, there are certain individuals and groups within Christianity who try to follow this path of inter-relatedness, make attempt to participate actively what concerns the larger public, and see people as end in themselves. This practice of living out the Gospel in the concrete circumstances needs to be affirmed and strengthened.

School of Philosophy and Religious Thought
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Book Review

THE DHARMA OF JESUS, ed. Francis X. D'Sa, S.J., Pune: Institute for the study of Religion, 1997, 480 pp.

"To leave the security of a theological home which rested on the foundation of a discipline that considered itself a science and a system... to set out in search of a theology that could motivate believers to make sense of and respond to the Indian situation" is the goal of the book. Originally planned as a tribute to Fr. George M. Soares - Prabhu S. J. for his sixtieth birthday, since papers failed to come in time, it was published as a commemorative volume after his tragic death in a road accident a few months after his sixty fifth birthday. The editor tells us that, of the sixteen papers all but two were edited by Fr. Soares himself. It begins with an article reviewing the theology of the eminent scholar and closes with a bibliography of his works. In looking for an adequate methodology for an Indian reading of the Bible, Soares Prabhu found the greatest obstacle in the alienation of the Indian theologian from the Indian masses. The various articles in this commemorative volume seek to transcend this barrier. Samuel Rayan S. J. writes about the presence of God in the oppressed masses. When Jesus is actually tortured and killed he is with the murdered children, with all the stripped, the scourged, the mocked, the tortured and crucified of history. Jesus' concern for a new tolerated society is shown by Antony da Silva in the Gospel story of the woman taken in adultery.

Yvon Ambose shows that God's empathy with the poor is not a sign of condescension, but of his authentic acceptance of the good that is present in them. According to Kurien Kunnumparam the basic thrust of the Judeo-Christian revelation is the creation of community where freedom, fellowship and justice flourish. Errol D'Lima S. J. argues that today's theologian can perform his/her function only with the community, for the community and through the community.

Besides the leading ideas of Soares - Prabhu who was a biblical scholar, the interdisciplinary approach of the book brings into focus a lot of related issues, social, psychological and inter-religious... As Raymond Panikkar

points out the great contribution of Sores-Prabhu was that he introduced powerful indic words into the reading of Christian Scriptures. So the relation between Hinduism and Christianity has changed from one of domination and confessed scorn to an attitude of sincere respect. Francis X. D'Sa S. J. the editor finds a specific instance of this in Soares's discussion of the dharma of Jesus taken primarily from the biblical Christian cultural world, but developed across cultural boundaries.

John B. Chethimattam

The general editor apologizes for the belated publishing of this review. It was ready soon after the book had been sent of us. But somehow it was misplaced.

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Editorial

Chartered ways are safer. The temptation is to prefer them to the non-chartered, unpredictable ones. Chartered ways bring stagnancy and passivity. Non-Chartered ways demand reinvigorated dynamism and renewed risk. When God entered into the act of creation, it was an option for non-chartered ways and unpredictable consequences and unlimited spiritual power. It was, while being a complete act, the beginning of a process of acts. That is God's nature. Authentic religion should promote a real relationship with this God so that God's nature may become man's nature. This experience is the basis of religion. Those who facilitate such an experience are authentic religious persons.

In the biblical tradition we read about such constant attempts made by authentic religious persons to walk the unknown paths passing beyond the enslaving and powerful temptation and tendency to yield to the stagnant and non-charismatic institutionalized and fossilized ways.

In this issue we make a perusal of this trend in the biblical history. The prophets were the agents of a subversive culture emerging from an option for charism and very often against institutions. That is the theme of the contribution made by Rui de Menezes.

In that prophetic tradition of subversive, liberative action letting the process of creation continue making anew the face of the earth, Jesus is the model par excellence. The Gospels testify to this fundamental attitude of Jesus.

The ministry of Jesus as presented in the synoptic tradition is surely the result of option for charism against fossilized and reified understanding of the institution. Paddy Meagher deals with this topic effectively.

Johannine Jesus is very powerful and terribly provocative in his reactions to the institution as against charism. Augustine Mulloor recaptures the most important and most focussed moments of the ministry of Jesus expressing his option for charism and for the charismatization of the institution.

Did not Paul experience this subversion on the way to Damascus? An experience of being thrown into the sea or led into the desert where no path is clear. That subversive attitude is reflected a lot in the writings of Paul. Mathew Thekekara analyses this aspect of Pauline teaching.

The fifth contribution is an attempt to look at the event of Exodus from the perspective of Institution vs charism, proposing it as a possible pattern or paradigm.

Bulletin presents a critique of the RSS Chief Mr. K. S. Sudershan's call for swadeshi Christian Churches by Kuncheria Pathil.

The Church becomes an authentic witness to the source and model of her mission only when she rises above the situation of "charteredness" and goes her own way and leads the people on the non-chartered paths ways and.. So the church has to pray daily with the Psalmist: "Teach me thy way O Lord" (Ps 27, 11)

Augustine Mulloor

Charism and Institution in the Teachings of the Prophets

Rui de Menezes

Charism in the prophetic teaching can be represented by the personality of a prophet; institution is embodied in the priest and then in the king. This article is a study on the relationship between prophecy, priesthood and kingship. But then even prophecy could have been institutionalized? The last part of the article relates the theme to the N. T. Vision.

1.0 Introduction

Sometimes one gets the impression that charism and institution have been played against each other in Christian theology. It looks as if the champions of charism are very negative towards and critical of institution or office. However it must be kept in mind that charism needs an institution as much as an institution needs charism if either has to exist and survive. All the same when the charism of an institution begins to droop and bureaucracy begins to take over, or in other words, when charism within an institution begins to flicker and fade and when an institution becomes an end in itself rather than a means, one could well sound the death-knell of that institution. Now in the age in which we live we have begun to experience the crisis of organised religion. Some religions have witnessed almost a mass exodus from their ranks. However this does not mean that people have become less religious. On the contrary there is a revived interest in religion, there is an upsurge of a longing for authentic religious experience. As a result a lot of smaller religious groups are being formed where individuals once again seem to be finding genuine religious experience, which they claim, they could not find in the impersonal, rigid, gigantic and unwieldy parent institution. And so this is a time for organised religions to do a bit of introspection and see if institutions and traditions have become ends in themselves instead of being the means for God-experience. It is time for institutions to examine whether they have been rooting out charism from

within their ranks. The Church in particular seems to be getting crushed under the weight of her dead dogmas and suffocated by the cloud of dust kicked up by some of her antiquated and irrelevant traditions. In ancient Israel in times of such crises Yahweh sent to the people of Israel prophets and prophetesses¹ who acted as the conscience of the people.² They remained within the fold of their religion but attacked the officials who contributed to the fossilisation of religion, and though they did not have an office all the same they enjoyed an authority which they received directly from God and not from the institution itself. And so religious institutions have to ask themselves whether they foster the charismatic dimension or whether they are silencing the charismatics that are within their fold, as Israel of old did with her prophets (cf. Am 2:12; 7:16b).

1.1 Priest versus Prophet?

Towards the end of the eighth century BCE a strange individual called Amos suddenly made his appearance at the central sanctuary of Bethel in the Northern Kingdom of Israel who publicly denounced the dynasty of Jeroboam II and the empty cult of the national sanctuary. Amaziah, the officiating priest employed by king Jeroboam II, sent a message to his master saying that Amos was plotting a conspiracy against him in the heart of the kingdom and that the country was not able to bear his words. He then warned Amos to return to his place of origin as quickly as he could since he had no business in the royal sanctuary whose caretaker he himself was (cf. Am 7:10-17). The formulation of the priest Amaziah's message to the king is worth noting. He refers to Amos as speaking in his own name: "Thus says Amos!" (Am 7:11). But Amos retorts by speaking in the name of Yahweh: "Thus says Yahweh!" (Am 7:17).³ Clearly Amaziah is betraying that he was

1 Israel which was a patriarchal society either ignored or bypassed the prophetesses. References to them are to be found in the prophet Ezekiel who refers to the band of false prophetesses in Jerusalem (cf. Ezek 13:17-23). The prophet Joel clearly makes no distinction based on gender when he says that in the eschatological times God would pour his spirit on both the sons and daughters of Israel (cf. Joel 3:1ff.). But the only woman who deserves the title of prophetess is Huldah (cf. 2 Kg 22). Miriam though called a prophetess was nothing more than a singer (cf. Ex 15:20), and Deborah was not a prophetess but a judge (cf. Judg 4:4 ff.).

2 See the title of the Bruce Vawter's book on the pre-exilic prophets, *The Conscience of Israel*. New York, 1961.

3 The Hebrew expression *kō 'āmar yhwh*, which is known as a messenger formula is normally translated as "Thus says the LORD". the word LORD in capitals, this being a convention for YHWH which was introduced out of reverence in case one

an official in the service of king Jeroboam II, thus owning that he was part and parcel of the institution. Whereas Amos even rejects the title of *nābī*⁴ or prophet⁴. He is only conscious that Yahweh has sent him! Amos is not an official accountable to some human authority, he is a charismatic directly responsible to the divine authority of Yahweh. What follows from all this is that priests and kings are understood as officials whereas prophets are hailed as charismatic figures. But is the evidence so univocal and clear? Or are we guilty of reading our present-day prejudices into the ancient biblical texts?

The aim of this paper is to investigate this problem. In order to do this, we shall examine the data which the Books of Samuel and Kings as well as the Prophetic Writings supply us with to see what the prophets have to say on the theme of charism and institution.

2.0 Priest, Seer and Prophet

A much discussed issue in the history of the religion of Israel is: What was the original function and role of Samuel and which are the roles that have been superimposed on him by later tradition? Was he a seer who gave information to those who consulted him for a fee as young Saul did when the she-asses of Kish, his father had strayed? (1 Sam 9:1-10). Was he a judge who went on his rounds from his home town in Ramah through Bethel, Gilgal and Mizpah? (1 Sam 7:15-17). Was he a priest who offered sacrifice on the high place and invited Saul to partake in it? (1 Sam 9:12-24). Or was he a prophet who received visions from Yahweh and was accredited as a prophet of Yahweh by all Israel? (1 Sam 3:1-21). Or is our question falsely posed? In other words were these different functions mutually exclusive and watertight as we consider them today? Or was it not possible for one person to be both a seer as well as a priest? In fact both in Mesopotamia and in Israel one of the functions of the priest was to give oracles, in Israel on the basis of the

took the name of God in vain (cf. Ex 20:7). It is to be noted that the Hebrew verb is in the past tense, and so we should actually translate the clause as "Thus has Yahweh said!" But conventionally the English uses the historic present. Even the NRSV which is usually as literal as possible in its rendering has the past tense in v. 11: "Thus Amos has said", but the present tense in v. 17 "Thus says the LORD".

4 For our present purpose it is unimportant why Amos rejects the title of *nābī*, and what this term exactly denotes. It is important that Amos is absolutely aware that Yahweh has chosen and sent him with a message to the Northern Kingdom all the way from distant Tekoa in the Southern Kingdom..

Urim and the Thummim (Deut 33:8-11; Ex 28:30) and in Mesopotamia according to various techniques of haruspicy, hepatoscopy or augury.⁵ We shall return to this later. For our present purpose we have to ask whether Samuel belonged to the institution or he was a charismatic. According to the Book of Samuel he is instrumental in anointing both Saul and David as king (cf. 1 Sam 10:1-8; 1 Sam 16:1-13), and he is also sent by God with a message to Saul that God had rejected him from the kingship (cf. 1 Sam 15:26). He is instrumental in explaining the “royal constitution to the people” (cf. 1 Sam 11:25 JB), which obviously is the job of an official and not the task of a charismatic.

3.0 Consulting God through Seers and Priests

The Book of Samuel informs us that “formerly in Israel anyone who went to inquire of God, would say, ‘Come, let us go to the seer’” (! Sam 9:9). The technical word for this inquiring of God is *dārash*. In the present case it is a question of getting information about the lost asses of Saul’s father. Similarly a more ancient text tells us that Rebecca went to consult God about the significance of the twins who seemed to be fighting with each other within her womb (Gen 25:22). Of course here we are not told which representative of Yahweh Rebecca went to consult. But there are plenty of instances where this function of being consulted in the name of God is attributed to priests who were normally attached to a given sanctuary as in the case of Bethel (cf. Judg 29:18,27). The Book of Samuel also tells us that king Saul consulted Yahweh by means of dream, oracle and prophet, but that Yahweh gave him no answer, as a result of which he finally has recourse to the witch of Endor (1 Sam 28:6ff.). Similarly quite a number of times it is the priest Ahimelech or his son Abiathar who regularly consults Yahweh on behalf of David (cf. 1 Sam 22:9,13; 28:1-13). In fact the whole of chapter 23 of this book gives us at least four instances where David consults Yahweh by having recourse to the *’ephôd*, whether he should attack the Philistines, whether he should go down to Keilah, whether Saul will come down to Keilah and whether the inhabitants of Keilah would hand him over to Saul. No wonder that when Abiathar was fleeing to David for refuge he had taken the *’ephôd* along with him as his most precious possession (cf. 1 Sam 23:6). In the second text to which we have just referred, the priest apparently puts on the *’ephôd* when

5 John McKenzie tells us that the Mesopotamian priesthood included diviners and magicians (cf. his *Dictionary of the Bible*, Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1865, under ‘Priest’, p. 689).

the consultation takes place.⁶ Sometimes the consultation is done by casting lots as in the case of Saul being chosen as the future king (cf. 1 Sam 10:20-23).

3.1 Consulting Yahweh through Prophets

Whereas king David had recourse to the *priests* Ahimelech and Abiathar in order to consult Yahweh in matters of war, the Book of Kings tells us how king Jehoshaphat consults Yahweh through the medium of the *prophets*. Thus when king Ahab of Israel and king Jehoshaphat of Judah make a coalition to wrest Ramoth-gilead from the Aramaeans, what they do is to “inquire (*dārash*) first for the word of the LORD” (1 Kgs 22:7), and so they assemble about four hundred prophets, who recommend the expedition. Jehoshaphat would prefer another opinion. And so Micaiah ben Imlah is summoned as one in whom Ahab has no trust because he never has a favourable word for him! He at first seems to concur with the other prophets with Zedekiah ben Chenanah as their head. But when he is put under oath, he prophesies utter disaster for the coalition. At this Zedekiah slaps Micaiah on the cheek! But the ensuing disaster proved Micaiah right (1 Kgs 22:1-40). On another occasion when Jehoram, the king of Israel, Jehoshaphat the king of Judah and the king of Edom prepare a coalition to march against Moab, Elisha the prophet is consulted regarding the feasibility of the expedition (2 Kgs 3:4-21).

Times of sickness and death also were occasions to consult God. Thus when the son of Jeroboam I falls sick, he sends his wife to Ahijah of Shiloh in a disguised manner to inquire of him about the future of the child (1 Kgs 14:1-18). Similarly king Ahaziah, son of Ahab consults the god of Ekron, that is to say, some prophet, priest or seer who represented him, regarding his own sickness after he had fallen from his upper room in Samaria. The prophet Elijah chides him for not consulting Yahweh, that is himself, in the following

6 There is ambiguity with regard to the exact meaning of the Hebrew word '*ēpōd*', which is usually translated as ephod. At least three meanings are clearly to be found in the Hebrew Bible. First of all it is linen garment similar to the loincloth worn by Egyptian priests, which the Bible tells us was worn by the young Samuel and by the priests of Nob (cf. 1 Sam 2:18; 22:18). Secondly it is a special part of the high priest's clothing (cf. Ex 29:5; Lev 8:7). And finally it is an object of cultic worship. For us only the second meaning is relevant. It is also significant that the breast-plate of judgement contained the Urim and the Thummim (cf. Ex 28:15,30). See R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel, Its Life and Institutions*, Darton, Longman & Todd, London, 1994, under the section, 'Priests and divine oracles', pp. 349-350.

words: "Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baalzebub, the god of Ekron?" (2 Kgs 1:4). Apparently there were fixed days for consulting these men of God. Thus when the child of the rich Sunamitess died she wanted to set out immediately to see the man of God, Elisha. At which her husband requests her to wait for the New Moon day or the Sabbath to go and consult him (cf. 2 Kgs 4:23). Clearly here is a proof that the prophets were considered as part of the establishment, even though the people believed that God spoke through them.

Now this custom of consulting the prophet continues even during the time of the classical prophets. Thus king Hezekiah consults the prophet Isaiah during the crisis created by Sennacherib's invasion of Palestine and his threats to the city of Jerusalem (Isa 37:1ff.). In fact when Hezekiah does not consult Isaiah⁷ before sending a delegation to Egypt asking for relief, the prophet takes him to task (Isa 30:1-7).

Similarly when the Book of the Covenant was discovered during the repairs that were being conducted in the Temple, and reports were sent to king Josiah, the latter immediately and as a matter of fact sent a delegation "to inquire of the LORD" (2 Kgs 22:12) about the contents of the book. At which they set out in search of the prophetess Huldah (cf. 2 Kgs 22:3-20).

Classical is the example of Jeremiah who is repeatedly being consulted by king Zedekiah during the time of the greatest crisis in the life of the nation (cf. Jer 37:1,17; 38:14-28). Naturally there were other prophets who also advised king Zedekiah and sometimes their advice clashed with that of Jeremiah. Thus there is once a confrontation between the prophet Jeremiah and the false prophet Hananiah. Jeremiah advises king Zedekiah to submit to the yoke of Nabukadnezzar, whereas Hananiah breaks the wooden yoke on Jeremiah's neck and advocates rebellion (cf. Jer 28). Jeremiah had already warned king and people not to listen to these prophets whom he branded as false. Instead of being 'men of the spirit' (*'anshē rūah'*), they were nothing but mere gust of wind (*rūah*)! (Jer 5:13).⁸ Jeremiah says that Yahweh had not

7 The text reads: "who set out to go down to Egypt without asking for my counsel" (Isa 30:2). The Hebrew has *upi o' shə'alū*, literally, "but they did not ask my mouth". Obviously the reference is to the prophet who is considered as Yahweh's mouth (cf. Jer 15:19b).

8 In the Hebrew text there is a pun on the word *rūah*, which can mean both 'spirit' as well as 'wind'. The prophet Hoshea calls a prophet '*īsh hərūah*' or a 'man of the spirit' (cf. Hos. 9:7)

sent them, they had not been present at the secret council of Yahweh (cf. Jer 23:21-22). What is interesting for our purpose is that Jeremiah lumps these prophets along with the diviners, dreamers, soothsayers and sorcerers! (Jer 27:9f.). Is Jeremiah making a subtle distinction between the true prophet who is a charismatic and a false prophet who is a court official dishing out oracles by watching the results of his oracular techniques?

Finally we come to the prophet Ezekiel, who tells us that "certain elders of Israel came to consult the LORD and sat down before me" (Ezek 20:1). But since Israel is guilty of apostasy Yahweh replies to them through the prophet Ezekiel that Yahweh will not let himself be consulted by them unless and until they change their lives (cf. Ezek 20:2-3).

3.2 Summing Up

From time immemorial the Israelites had been going to a seer, to a priest or to a prophet to inquire of God. Kings seem to have had their own officials whom they consulted specially before undertaking a military expedition as we have seen in the case of David, Jehoshaphat and others. First of all it is not at all sure that the roles of seer and priest were totally different and attributed to different individuals. We see from the evidence that insofar as David had recourse to the *priests* Ahimelech and Abiathar to inquire of Yahweh, later kings seem to be consulting *prophets*. The second problem that we are faced with is whether we are to consider these individuals officials of the royal court or charismatics? It is difficult to decide. Jeremiah for one clearly distinguishes between himself who is totally under the direction of Yahweh and the so-called false prophets who spin yarns out of their own heads.

4.0 Gad and Nathan, Court Officials or Charismatics?

In this section we shall consider two important individuals who were deeply involved in the personal and political life of king David. These are the prophets Gad and Nathan. Gad is referred to as a *nabi'* or prophet, who seems to be accompanying David on his wanderings as he was fleeing from king Saul. He advises David to leave the stronghold of Moab and return to the land of Judah (1 Sam 22:3-5). Once again the prophet Gad, who is now called David's seer (*hōzēh*), who is sent by Yahweh to David with the choice for his punishment in taking the census (2 Sam 24:10-15). And finally we are informed that it was the prophet Gad, this time mentioned only by name without any title, who advised David to build an altar to Yahweh on the threshing-floor of Araunah which David had purchased from him

(2 Sam 24:18-25). David follows his advice knowing that he was speaking at Yahweh's bidding (2 Sam 24:19). Now even though Gad is called David's seer, as if he were an official in his employment, characteristics typical of a charismatic prophet are also attributed to him. He is sent by Yahweh with a message to king David. And so it is difficult to brand Gad merely as a court official.

The case of Nathan is very similar to that of Gad. When David had made a plan to construct a temple worthy of Yahweh, the prophet Nathan fully concurs with the king's plan as any court official would do. But that very night Yahweh challenges Nathan and sends him with a message to king David to drop the plan! (cf. 2 Sam 7:1-11). At the time of the intrigues of Adonijah who was supported in his claims to become David's successor by Joab and Abiathar the priests, we find the prophet Nathan siding himself with Zadok the priest and with Benaiah, who backed Solomon. Indeed he takes the leading role in promoting Solomon's cause by making Bathsheba approach David, who had apparently promised her on oath that her son Solomon would succeed him, to remind him of this promise (1 Kgs 1:13). Accordingly David commissions Zadok, the priest, Nathan the prophet and Benaiah to make sure that Solomon is crowned king at the spring of Gihon. In fact we are expressly told that David gives orders to Zadok and Nathan to anoint Solomon king (1 Kgs 1:32). Here Nathan seems to be part of the establishment and almost like a royal official. But in the case of David's censure in the matter of the adultery with Bathsheba and the orchestrated murder of Uriah the Hittite, her husband (2 Sam 11), Nathan seems to be nothing less than the later charismatic prophets who not only do not obsequiously bow down to kings but on the contrary censure them in the name of Yahweh (cf. 2 Sam 12:1-15).

5.0 Elijah, a Charismatic and Elisha, a Man of the Establishment?

It is interesting to note that both these men are given the epithet, '*îsh hælōhîm*' or 'man of God'. Thus Elijah is referred to as a man of God (2 Kgs 1:9-13). Similarly Elisha too is given the same title (2 Kgs 4:7-27; 6:6). Elijah refers to himself also as a *nâbî* or a prophet (1 Kgs 18:22), whereas the widow of Zarephat calls him a 'man of God' (1 Kgs 17:18,24). Elisha is also called a *nâbî* or prophet (2 Kgs 2:11-15; 5:3,9,13). But the life-style of these two men is quite different. Elijah is a loner dwelling in lonely places like the wadi Kerith being fed by ravens and drinking the water of the stream (1 Kgs 17:2-6). He wears a hair cloak and a leather loincloth (2 Kgs 1:8), and is completely under the influence of the spirit who carried him from place to

place (1 Kgs 18:12; cf. 2 Kgs 2:16). He was such a threat to king Ahab and his wife Jezebel that the latter had sworn to finish him off, and as a result Elijah had to flee from her wrath (1 Kgs 19:2). He was surely not among the four hundred prophets who dined at queen Jezebel's table (cf. 1 Kgs 18:19). In fact king Ahab expressly calls him "my enemy" (1 Kgs 21:20). If any prophet deserves the name of charismatic it is Elijah.

Elisha on the contrary was living in community whose head and father he was (2 Kgs 4:38-41; 6:1). He seems to be in touch with various brotherhoods of the prophets at Bethel, Jericho and in the highlands of Ephraim (2 Kgs 2:3-5; 4:1,38; 5:22). He is directly involved in the life of the nation (cf. 2 Kgs 6:8-23) and even in the political affairs of Damascus (2 Kgs 8:7ff.). Under his instructions a member of the prophetic brotherhood anoints Jehu king of Israel (2 Kgs 9:1-10). Even the king of Israel has great respect for him and calls him "my father" (2 Kgs 6:21). He seems to have had a lot of influence with the king and the army commander of Israel as he was quite ready to recommend the Shunamitess to them (cf. 2 Kgs 4:13). At his death, Joash, the king of Israel mourns for him with tears in his eyes, calls him 'my father', and regards him as the chariot of Israel and its chargers (2 Kgs 13:14-17), and even in his last moments he is interested in the welfare of the country (cf. 2 Kgs 13:18-19). What more would be required to consider him as part of the establishment?

6.0 Prophets as Temple Officials?

There is no need to go so far as the Scandinavian School which makes even of Amos, the most charismatic of all the classical prophets, into a cult official based on the fact that is referred to as a *nōqēd* (Am 1:1), whose equivalent in Ugaritic is the term for a priest. But there seems to be little doubt that the post-exilic prophets Haggai and First Zechariah massively engage themselves in the re-building of the Temple and in the restoration of its cult (cf. Hag 1:1-15; Zech 1:16; 6:15). On the other hand it is more than curious that the pre-exilic prophet Jeremiah is often to be found in the Temple premises (cf. Jer 7:1ff.; 26:1ff.); and seems to have had a room in the Jerusalem Temple complex (cf. Jer 35:1-11). Since in the religions of the Ancient Near East there was no hard and fast rule to distinguish between priests and prophets, and since both were attached to their sanctuaries and temples, one could well raise the question whether the same did not hold good for Israel as well. In fact we see that priests and prophets after listening to the words of Jeremiah in the Temple, seize hold of him and threaten him with death for advocating surrender to Nabukadnezzar (cf. Jer 26:7ff.). Roland de

Vaux also raises the question: "Were there prophets attached to the Temple?"⁹, and even though he answers it in the negative, he warns us that any "extreme position is quite untenable"¹⁰ And so we could say that the Scandinavian position which makes of prophets cult officials is as wrong as the German Critical School which says that the prophets were negating the cult. The biblical evidence shows that quite often as we have seen, they are found together in the Temple precincts. But the fact that the prophetical books contain Temple liturgies like Joel and Habakkuk (Joel 3:13ff.; Hab 3:1ff.), and the Psalter contains prophetical oracles (cf. Ps 110:1) shows that the question is valid even though no definite answer can be given at the present. It is of course probable that in the post-exilic times when the charismatic flame of prophecy began to flicker until it finally died out (cf. Lam 2:9c), priestly bureaucracy took the upper hand.

7.0 Classical Prophets and Priests

When we come to the time of the Classical Prophets, that is, from the eighth century BCE onwards there seems to be a clear differentiation between priests and prophets. The former seem to belong to what is called office, with fixed rights and duties and conditions for recruiting. How uncomplicated priesthood was in the pre-Solomonic times is anybody's guess. In the earliest times apparently any father of a family *ipso facto* was priest as can be gathered from the patriarchal times. There were no fixed laws regulating cult and sacrifice. Thus we see the patriarchs officiating as priests at the various sanctuaries in Canaan. Even in the time of Moses we see him employing young men to offer sacrifices (cf. Ex 24:5). And even the law regarding the building of an altar in every place the only thing that is insisted upon is that it be built of earth or of undressed stones (cf. 20:24-25). Similarly in the Book of Judges we do not see any priest offering sacrifices but the people themselves: "On the next day, the people got up early, and built an altar there, and offered burnt offerings and sacrifices of well-being" (Jdg 21:3). There are no hints of a specific priestly class.

But gradually, especially after the time of Solomon when the national sanctuary was built it looks as if the priests were considered as royal officials. Thus the priests Zadok and Abiathar are mentioned among the officials of David alongside the commander of the army, the recorder and the

9 cf. R. de Vaux, *op cit.*, p. 384. Read the whole section in pp. 384-86.

10 cf. *Ibid.*, p. 385.

secretary. There we are also told that David's sons were priests (cf. 2 Sam 8:15-18). The Book of Kings expressly tells us that king Solomon not only appoints army commanders but priests as well. Thus he dismissed Abiathar from the office of priesthood and named Zadok in his place (1 Kgs 2:35). And later on among the various officials of king Solomon Azariah son of Zadok is mentioned as priest (cf. 1 Kgs 4:1). And the very fact that after the religious schism king Jeroboam I appointed priests from ordinary families shows that they were officials directly responsible to him (1 Kgs 12:31). And as we have already seen Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, was directly responsible to Jeroboam II (cf. Am 7:10-17).

The later laws regulating the priesthood though themselves late as far as their formulation goes, possibly post-exilic, surely have their roots in pre-Solomonic times. Thus priests had to be males and descendants of Aaron of the tribe of Levi (cf. Ex 29:27-30). Impediments that would render a man unfit for the priestly office are laid down such as deformity or blindness or eye or skin disease for instance (cf. Lev 21:16-21). They were not allowed to wear tonsures or shave the edges of their beards or gash their bodies (Lev 21:5). They were not allowed to make themselves ritually impure by touching a dead body except that of a very close relative like parents or children (Lev 21:1-2). As for the high priest he was not allowed even this exception (Lev 21:11). They were not allowed to marry a woman that was a prostitute or a divorcee (Lev 21:7). In addition to all these regulations, the high priest was not allowed to marry a widow (Lev 21:14). Minute laws describe the way they are to be consecrated priests and the priestly garb they are to wear while ministering (cf. Lev 8:1-36).

When we come to the classical Prophets we see that they were chosen directly by God from any rank of society. No wonder the call account is so important in their writings and it is described by Amos (Am 7:10-17), Isaiah (Isa 6), Jeremiah (Jer 1:4-10), Ezekiel (Ez 1:1-3:21) and Second Isaiah (Isa 40:1-8). Not only were they not royal or court officials but they chided kings in the name of Yahweh and took them to task when they neglected their duties towards God and the citizens of Israel.

8.0 Domestication of Charism

Charism is always perceived as a threat by the institution as can be most clearly seen by the persecution of Yahweh's prophets by king Ahab and queen Jezebel. Classical is the case of Ahab's intervention on behalf of Naboth whose vineyard the royal couple had grabbed (cf. 1 Kgs 21). Similarly too we see the priests of Jerusalem persecuting and threatening Jeremiah

with death, typically among them being the priest Pashhur (Jer 19-20) and the priest Zephaniah (Jer 29:24-32). Another tactic used by the institution would be to absorb the charism or better domesticate it and bring it under its control. Thus in the Book of Isaiah we see prophets mentioned alongside sorcerers and soothsayers as well as judges, soldiers, counsellors and princes (cf. Isa 3:1-4). Similarly too Jeremiah and Ezekiel who are borderline prophets being both pre-exilic and post-exilic implicitly consider prophets as one of the organs of Israelite society. The first one says: “Instruction (*tôrâ*) shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet” (Jer 18:18). Ezekiel speaks of the same topic in very similar terms when he tells us that in the disasters that will visit the people, “they shall keep seeking a vision from the prophet; instruction shall perish from the priest, and counsel from the elders” (Ez 7:26). And the Book of Deuteronomy which treats of the various organs of the covenant mentions prophecy along with the various other means a society of that time had for consulting God. The author first mentions levitical judges (Dt 18:8-13), followed by kings (Dt 18:14-20), then levitical priests (18:1-8), and finally he mentions the various types of what we would call magicians or diviners, which contemporary religions in the ancient Near East had, in place of whom Yahweh had gifted to Israel the institution of prophecy (Dt 18:9-22). But as Jeremiah’s contemporaries were confronted with various types of prophets who openly contradicted one another as the notorious tussle between Jeremiah and Hananiah ben Azzur shows, the people had no means of ascertaining which of them was right. And so Jeremiah provides them with a valid criterion (cf. Jer 28:1-17). He teaches that if the prophet were to prophesy war, famine and plague there was every likelihood that he was a true prophet. But if he were to prophesy *shâlôm*, that is, prosperity and peace, in that case, only if his prophecy were to be fulfilled could he be considered a true prophet (cf. Jer 28:7-9).

9.0 Identification of Office and Charism in the New Testament

The author of the so-called *Pastorals*¹¹ uses the phrase *anthropos theou* or ‘man of God’ twice in the First and Second Letter to Timothy (cf. 1 Tim

11 According to W. G. Kuemmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, SCM London, 1975, p. 367, the epithet ‘Pastoral’ was first used for the Letter to Titus by D. N. Bardot in 1703, and for all three by P. Anton, *Exegetische Abhandlungen der Past. Pauli*, in 1753/55. This information appears in the footnote in the English translation, whereas it is given in the text of the original German. See Feine-Behm-Kuemmel, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, Quelle & Meyer, Heidelberg, 1964.

6:11 and 2 Tim 3:17). And in fact these are the only instances where this expression appears in the New Testament. However it is not absolutely clear what this term signifies and to whom it is applied in these two letters. Martin Dibelius in his commentary, *The Pastoral Epistles*¹² referring to the first instance in the First Letter to Timothy (1 Tim 6:11) says: "In this context it refers to Timothy in particular, not to the Christian in general"¹³, and a little further he tells us: "But the parallel in 2 Tim 3:17 shows that the author did not have in mind the image of the 'man of God' which the OT suggests".¹⁴ Here precisely lies the problem. What is the Old Testament understanding of this phrase? As we have already seen, as far as the Books of Samuel and Kings are concerned, it seems to refer to seers and prophets. And the same meaning is valid also for the Book of Judges (cf. Judg 13:6-8). But it is important to note that in the later post-exilic literature the phrase '*îsh hâ 'elôhîm*' is reserved for some very important personages who were considered as law-givers like Moses and David. And so we notice that the term has undergone a shift in meaning. Thus Moses is called 'the man of God' in Deut 33:1 as well as in Ps 90:1. The next three instances that refer to Moses are to be found in the work of the Chronicler (cf. 1 Chr 23:14; 2 Chr 30:16 and Ezra 3:2). David is also referred to as "the man of God" in the work of the Chronicler and in this the Chronicler is unique (cf. 2 Chr 8:14; Neh 12:24,36).

Now the Pastorals reflect a church that has become hierarchical and institutionalised, where the preoccupation is with the "deposit of faith" (1 Tim 6:20; 2 Tim 1:14), orthodoxy or "sound doctrine" (1 Tim 1:10; 2 Tim 4:3), and rooting out of heresies. This is not the time of Paul and the early church, where Paul in particular appears as a real charismatic figure. Now since the author of the letter calls 'Timothy' a "man of God" we can see here a close parallel to the post-exilic Chronicler where both Moses and David appear as law-givers. The Pastorals too explicitly mention the term 'Law' normally

P. 265. These writings which are similar as far as style, vocabulary and historical situation are concerned are not the work of Paul but reflect a much later age. Obviously they are written pseudonymously.

12 See the English translation of the 4th revised German edition, *The Pastoral Epistles*, by Martin Dibelius + and Hans Conzelmann, Hermeneia Series, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1972. It first appeared in German as *Die Pastoralbriefe*, by Martin Dibelius, J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), Tuebingen, 1955. Conzelmann revised it in 1966 as the 4th edition.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 87.

14 *Ibid.*

associated with Moses its lawgiver (cf. 1 Tim 1:7-8). That the task of Timothy, which is of governing the community, is similar to that of Moses, becomes clear when 'Paul' warns 'Timothy' that heretics will contradict and harass him as the heretics Jannes and Jambres¹⁵ defied Moses in Egypt (cf. 2 Tim 3:6-9).

Now the next instance where the expression 'man of God' appears is 2 Tim 3:17. It seems to apply primarily to 'Timothy' himself, but it could as well be applied to any Christian. And this is what the later Church did precisely. Martin Dibelius in the commentary to the Pastorals to which we have referred, gives a quotation from Philo, which prepared the ground for this universalisation. In Philo's opinion the leading priests of Egypt refer to the Jews as 'men of God'. We quote: "Hence the leading Egyptian priests . . . call us (the Jews!) 'men of God', a title which does not belong to the rest of men, save to such as worship the true God" (*Ep. Ar.* 140).¹⁶ In Philo the expression applies to all Jews, whereas the Church will extend it not only to the leaders of the Christian community but to all Christians.

10.0 New Testament Priesthood as Charism?

Christian theologians while comparing the priests of the Old and the New Testaments¹⁷ seem to hold that since the Old Testament priesthood was hereditary, it was by that very fact a profession that is, an office. But, say they, the New Testament priesthood is not limited to any class, caste or family. And so the New Testament priests are more like the prophets of the Old Testament, who received a special vocation from God. This of course is stated nowhere in the New Testament itself. As the Pastorals for example,

15 Neither the Biblical tradition nor Philo nor Josephus mentions Jannes and Jambres by name. But Jewish tradition identifies them with the magicians of Pharaoh who challenged Moses (cf. Ex 7:8ff.). Sometimes instead of Jambres we also find Mambres, as in the Vulgate, from the Aramaic *mamre*'. Cf. Dibelius-Conzelmann, *op. cit.*, p. 117. According to the *Damascus Document* the two were brothers who were set up by Belial, the Prince of Darkness (CD V 17-19). See also *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. 2, ed. by G. A. Buttrick, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1952, under 'Jannes and Jambres'.

16 Cf. M. Dibelius, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

17 For the study of Old Testament priesthood, see George M. Soares Prabhu, "The Priesthood as a Call in the Old Testament", and for that of the New Testament, see my article, "The Priesthood as a Call in the New Testament", in *Vocation: God's Call to Man*, ed. by Thomas Thyparampil, NVSC Research Series 1, Pune, 1975, pp. 53-85.

tell us, "whoever aspires to the office of bishop (*episkopê*) desires a noble task", which is followed by the qualifications one must have for that office (cf. 1 Tim 3:1ff.). Further 'Paul' himself gives instructions to 'Titus' to *appoint* presbyters (*presbyteroi*) in every city of Crete! (cf. Tit 1:5; italics ours). There is no doubt that the New Testament writers, when speaking of the New Testament priests, avoid using the Greek word *hiereus*, which refers to a cultic priest. The word *hiereus* is applied only to Jesus Christ (cf. Heb 7:3,11,15).¹⁸ For those they used the Greek expression *presbyteroi* which means 'elders'. Now this expression is applied to a person whom the community delegates to act on its behalf, and consequently is an office and not a charism. Thus the Septuagint translates the Old Testament Hebrew *zignê hā'ām* with *presbytero i tou laou*. And so this by no means proves that the New Testament priests are *ipso facto* men filled with charism, rather the contrary is true. The New Testament priesthood is totally under the control of the higher hierarchy. If it were directly under the control of God, he would not have discriminated against women! Similarly too Canon Law has specified certain impediments for the New Testament priesthood just as the Book of Leviticus had done for the Old Testament priests of bygone ages.

11.0 Conclusion

Our investigation into the teaching of the Prophets as found in the Books of Samuel, Kings and the writings of the Classical Prophets as well as Deuteronomy has shown us how complex the matter we are reflecting on is. The forerunners of the Classical Prophets whether they were wandering 'men of God', seers stationed at a particular local sanctuary or court prophets, seemed to have been occupying some sort of office or fulfilling a role that was deemed necessary by the community of Israel whether it was the loose federation of tribes in the early times or the monarchical society of later times. At the same time one notices that they were also under the influence and subject to the orders of Yahweh. Thus we see the simple people having recourse to various seers or men of God to get help from them in their various needs and problems whether it was a case of lost property or sickness or death. Kings also consulted the men of God, the priests, the seers or the prophets in particular before engaging on a military institution. But the biblical literature proves beyond the shadow of a doubt that even these men and women never really gave an unconditional allegiance to the

¹⁸ In fact in the next chapter, that Heb 8:1, Jesus is referred to as *archiereus* or high priest. See also Heb 5:5. It is to be noted that all Christians are called 'priests' but that is at the end of time (cf. Apoc 1:6; 5:10; 20:6).

people or to their kings but always stood under the all-pervasive sway of Yahweh. Thus they did not shrink from censuring kings and queens when these went against the will of God as expressed in the Torah, to which as Deuteronomy teaches, the king was subject (cf. Deut 17:18-20). These men were never psychophants or flatterers of their masters. Such were branded as false prophets by genuine prophets who were charismatics in the real sense of the word. Thus we see that the line of demarcation or differentiation between office and charism was at times like the razor's edge.

But when we come to the Classical Prophets from the time of Amos in the late eighth century BCE we are confronted with real charismatics. They did not occupy any office but rather challenged the official guardians of Israel whether they were kings or priests, to be loyal to Yahweh and to protect the rights of the common citizens of Israel. But even these seem to have fulfilled a function which did look like that which an office gives, as can be seen by the frequency with which Isaiah and Jeremiah for example are consulted by the contemporary kings. In fact as we have seen Jeremiah even gives a criterion for distinguishing between genuine and false prophets (cf. Jer.).

The problem of the post New Testament Church specially from the beginning of the second century of our era is that it seems to confuse office and charism by proclaiming that every New Testament priest is *ipso facto* a prophet, that is a charismatic, merely because the priestly office is no longer hereditary and confined to the tribe of Levi and the House of Aaron. But as we have shown if priesthood were really charismatic and under the direct influence and authority of God women could not and would not have been excluded from the priesthood, and the Church would have had no right to define and delimit qualifications and impediments for the priesthood. What is important is that New Testament Church officials should not forget that the Church is not a purely sociological reality but is also under the control of God, and so its ministers must look for inspiration to the Spirit who accompanies the Church on her earthly pilgrimage. Thus it is a desideratum as Moses taught long ago (cf. Num 11:26-30), that not only the Church leaders but the whole people of God should be prophets! It is in this sense that St Paul puts offices and charisms on a par, and just as he considers Church leaders and teachers as charismatics, so too he considers prophets as officials in the Church (cf. 1 Cor 12:27-30).

Charism and Institution

Reflections based on Mark, Matthew and Luke's Interpretations of Jesus Christ

Paddy Meagher

This is a contribution towards the understanding of the relationship between charism and institution in the teaching and life of Jesus as presented in the synoptic tradition. Taking each Gospel in its own theological vision, the author discusses how Jesus is the creator and critique of the institution. The relationship of Jesus to Jewish religion, to God, to the Spirit etc. forms part of the reflection.

This study will be a series of soundings based on each of these Gospels with the interrelationship of charism and institution as the point around which the ideas are arranged. This may suggest ways for further study of this topic. To do justice to the topic we would have to write a long article on each Gospel.

We shall begin this study from the more difficult Gospel, which because of its brevity and its purpose does not develop the dimension of institution so clearly. We preface the study with a few necessary observations. We are not dealing directly with Jesus of Nazareth and his historical ministry but rather with the foundational interpretations to be found in Mark, Matthew and Luke. At times we will write as if we were describing the actual ministry of Jesus. We are aware that the interpretations are not distortions and that they echo the reality of his historical life and ministry.¹

1 We shall not refer to many authorities. We attempt to study the theme from our own experience and acknowledge many authors whose writing has formed us. At the time of working on the article we were teaching a course on "The Socio-cultural Background to the Gospels". A key book which we used as a text book has influenced many aspects of the article. We cite the reference only here: Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels*, Minneapolis. Fortress Press, 1992.

Charism and Institution

We take “charism” not in the sense of the gifts about which Paul writes in Corinthians and Romans. Over about half a century the community of believers within the Catholic tradition and in other Christian traditions has been returning to origins and to the great origin in the person, life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. The complex upheavals in human history have demanded processes of re-interpretation of the inheritance passed down from Jesus of Nazareth. The life of the World Council of Churches has witnessed to this. The Vatican Council was a great moment in this process and the emergence of the various theologies - liberational, black, feminist, dalit, tribal and the burgeoning of “churches” in Asia and Africa indicates this ferment. By *charism* we understand the person of Jesus Christ and the core or primary elements of his life, teaching and actions as interpreted by the Gospel writers.

This *charism* is embodied in a community. This community is created by, and exists because of, Jesus of Nazareth, the founding figure who mediates the experience of God in his person, life and teaching. The institution is a body of believers, their recognized way of life with an articulated body of beliefs, a system of rites with prescribed rituals to celebrate the experience of the foundational figure, a common way of life and behavior. The institution ensures that the charism is embodied within human society and its many cultural expressions in a human way, visible, tangible, recognizable and stable. It has persons, bodies, organizations, legal systems and visible structures which preserve, teach and hand down the complex foundational charism and its historical interpretations and celebrations.

The institution is essential to enable faith communities through time to live the foundational experiences and preserve the historical ways they have been interpreted, lived and developed. The *charism* and institution are two sides of one reality and interrelate to each other. The kernel of each originated with Jesus Christ the Lord. The institution is at the service of *charism*, subordinate to the foundational experiences that mediate God as Father, Jesus as Lord and the Spirit as the source of life.

The danger is that the institution becomes an end in itself through its complex, varied expressions and thus charism is socialized. Other human experiences embodied in culture and at variance with the foundational religious experience and the founding figure and his purpose obscure, dilute, enfeeble, paralyze, deaden, falsify, misrepresent... *charism*. The institution

is meant to be its sacrament but can easily become its oppressive master. *Charism* is the catalyst, the leaven, the seed and the soul of the institution.

The Gospel of Mark

Jesus Creator of the Institution

We shall begin with Jesus as the creator of the institution.

He went up the mountain and called to him *those whom he wanted*, and they came to him. And *he appointed twelve*, whom he also named apostles, *to be with him*, and *to be sent out to proclaim the message*, and *to have authority to cast out demons*. So *he appointed the twelve*: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); James son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder); and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. Then he went home. (Mark 3:13-19).

The text makes it very clear that Jesus creates a community both continuous with the People of God to which he belonged and also with new foundational ancestors. The community is also new because “the time has been fulfilled and the Gospel of God, namely of God’s reign, has broken into history in his person in a final manner. I presume the understanding of the great opening of Marcan interpretation of Jesus’ life’s work (Mk: 1:14-15). These men are to be committed to him (“to be with him”) and to be responsible to ensure that his God given mission is continued. This is summarized in two ways, namely “to proclaim the message” and to “have authority to cast out demons”. Some aspects of this are repeated in the final scene in this Gospels. Though Mark does not have a final scene in which Jesus commissions “the Twelve” the Gospel does provide a final conclusive scene.

Later he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were sitting at the table; and he upbraided them for their lack of faith and stubbornness, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen. And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation. The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: by using my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes in their hands, and if they drink any

deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover." So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and proclaimed the good news everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that accompanied it (Mark 16:14)

Here attention is drawn to a number of points. The first is the question of unfaltering loyalty and commitment of the Eleven to Jesus Christ as the living Lord. They have to proclaim the Gospel to all and the community of believers is to be universal. The enthroned Lord's presence was experienced by the Eleven and was visible in the power which the community members had over spirits and the sick, in their enthusiastic speech in prayer meetings and in the ways he protected them from poisonous snakes and substances. We need now to take up some aspects of the *charism* according to Mark's Jesus.

Jesus' Critique of the Institution: Many Other Things Like This

A way to approach the question of the relationship of charism and institution is to look at Jesus' critique of the institution in his own religion. We choose two related areas. Jesus' critique of the traditions about washing (7:1-23) and the observance of the Sabbath (2:23-3:6a). In the first text sequence the figures involved are the teachers of the Law who have clear and necessary institutional roles and the Pharisees who represent the *charism* of Judaism embodied in a movement which takes on institutional characteristics.² Beginning from a concrete criticism concerning the behaviour of his disciples Jesus moves on to another. He indicates how human traditions which arise as interpretation of certain aspects of the *charism* as enshrined in God's Word or Law can become such that they distort and even make it void. They create within the community insiders and outsiders on the basis of human traditions. Jesus also refers to hypocrisy in terms of lip service to God without loyalty of the heart. He looks at the danger from another angle when he speaks of defilement. He sees the human heart as the source of human actions both good and bad and not what comes from 'outside'. Again

2 Such movements are part of modern Catholic life and function as a type of institutional force in the community of faith with at times inherent dangers to aspects of the primary charism inherited from Jesus Christ. For a positive attitude see "Lay Movements in the Catholic Church" in *Catholic International* 11(2000).

a danger for all who are responsible for the institutional aspects of a community is to judge from appearances and exterior practices.

In a second case Jesus again does contextual theology. Beginning from a concrete case he indicates that radical issues of *charism* are at stake. The Sabbath is to enhance human life (2:25) and to be an expression of a fundamental aspect of *charism*, namely “to do good” or “to save life” (3:4). If ways of observing the Sabbath are detrimental to human life then obviously they are distortions. We can find a number of dangers rising from the institutional character of religion and those who protect it. The interpretation of a good and necessary law becomes absolute instead of interacting with the complexity of needs, situations, cultural backgrounds and ethical maturity of members of the community. Institutional figures take on the role of “watching ...that they may accuse”(3:2) and are too ready to say “it is not lawful”(2:24) without doing contextual theological thinking or following the wise advice of Ignatius of Loyola related to statements of others: “... it is necessary to suppose that every good Christian is more ready to put a good interpretation on another’s statement than to condemn it as false. If an orthodox construction cannot be put on a proposition, the one who made it should be asked how he understands it” (Spiritual Exercises no.22). The third danger is the way movement members show a hardness of heart before the new, the different and the creativity of people(Mk 2:21-22. Cf. Lk 5:39). They can also merge their power with the power of political groups to harm those persons. We only take these two examples from Mark.

Authority over the Spirit World

The Gospel with the breaking in of the reign of God is exemplified in Jesus’ Marcan ministry through his power over the unclean spirits (demons).³ The significance of this ministry depends on the grasp of the culture of the period with the vivid awareness of forces, personalized in that culture, which control human lives and create an atmosphere of great fear, dehumanize the human and disrupt in serious ways social relationships.

3 We list the texts. In his first act Jesus overpowers an unclean spirit (1:23-27). Mark includes this ministry in his summaries (1:34,39; 3:11) the scene of the Legion, the daughter of the Syrophenician mother, an epileptic (5:1-20; 7:25-29; 9:17-28), in the responsibilities of the Twelve (3:15; 6:7,13) and the early experiences of the community (16:17). Jesus encounters Satan (1:13) and is accused of being possessed himself (32-30). Spirit forces (see 1:25 and 4:39) cause a storm at sea. This theme is absent from the second part of the Gospel.

The belief in a world of good spirits (angels) and unclean spirits in the world of the divine and the human was a key aspect of life. The reign of God implies that the community is freed from the power of unclean spirits. Jesus is perceived as a person related to God and given authority and power over the spirit world. By his actions he overpowered the spirit world ("binds up evil"), restored people to community and dissipates the atmosphere of debilitating fear and threat. The man possessed by the legion epitomizes the power and effects of possession by unclean spirits.

This authority and power of God over the culturally conditioned expression of evil symbolizes the authority and power over any force or human agencies, which dehumanize human life and dignity. This is an essential gift to the ministry of the community of believers. The community is empowered and commissioned so that this aspect of her *charism* remains operative in her mission in the world.

Paradoxically the unclean spirits or demons are able to recognize the deep reality of Jesus' person. They call him "the holy one of God" or "Son of God", being desperate to ward off his power. This leads us to the Marcan understanding of the person of Jesus. The members of the more influential movement, the Pharisees and the interpreters of the Law grossly misunderstand Jesus as they witness his healing, authority over the unclean spirits and sin and his teaching which is at variance with their understanding of the Law. The crowds are in danger of misunderstanding him as the theme of secrecy indicates. Herod at least grasps that he is filled with God's authority and power believing him to be John come back to life. We will focus our attention on the disciples. Here we have another aspect of *charism*.

Jesus and Discipleship - Charism and Institution

The scenes of the loaves (6:30-44 and 8:1-10) and the scenes on the Lake (4:35-41; 6:45-52) are the occasions when Mark underlines the failure of the disciples' (probably the Twelve 3:14; 6:7) understanding of the nature of authority and power with which God endowed Jesus (4:38,41; 6:49-50,51; 8:14-21). It was a painful process for them before they perceived that he is the anointed of God. We will not elaborate on their lack of understanding nor the grip which cultural values had on these men as evidenced in the texts related to the three predictions of the Passion (8:31-9:1; 9:30-37; 10:32-45). Jesus is known as the Son, Christ and Lord only in and through his intense suffering and crucifixion (14:61-62; 15:39). Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified is alive as Lord, Son and Christ. This is a core aspect of charism. A collocary of this touches on the nature of discipleship.

In this section we will contrast the character of discipleship that Jesus underlines and is part of the charism with what discipleship can degenerate into because of the influence of cultural and social factors which infect the community through its necessary institutional nature.

Being a disciple of a crucified Lord demands a radical stepping back from the Self, the world and the power of shame. Loyalty to the Lord implies the readiness to share in his cup and his baptism (10: 38-39) which symbolize this attitude. However Peter who has an institutional role has been deeply corrupted (Satan 8:33) by the value system of his cultural world and does not just resist his teacher but disregards his basic option (8:32-33). The Twelve (9:35; 10:32) represent the institutional dimension of the community to whom in a special way the *charism* is entrusted. They must resist continually the cultural pressures so that authority and responsibility do not become means of domination and acquisition of status and honor, but invitations to ever greater humility and undiscriminating service. The cultural contrast between being great ones and rulers and being servants and slaves of all demands our attention. Traits of Indian social values and culture are similar to those of Jesus' culture.⁴ A rich aspect of the core of the *charism* is the Jesus who serves and is not served and who surrenders his life for the benefit of many. The institution as a whole and in its responsible figures has been entrusted with the duty of ensuring that Jesus as servant is visible to the world.

We shall conclude our reflections based on this Gospel recalling who is the Marcan Jesus. The angel as the spokesperson of God the Father reminds the readers that the Jesus who is alive is no other than Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified (16: 6). The Centurion also reminds the reader that Jesus is the Son of God who never demands secrecy when a believer stands before him crucified and confesses "Indeed, this man is the Son of God" (15:39). The demand for secrecy on which Jesus had insisted in impossible situations he dropped in the midst of his persistent silence as he is questioned by the High Priest: "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed one?", Jesus' simple "I am" is clothed in a frightening confession: "You will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming with the clouds of

4 We have not the space to develop this point. The concise summaries on the topics Honor and Shame Societies, Coalitions/ Factions, The Patronage System in Roman Palestine and Social Relations in Social Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels deserves to be read.

heaven" (14:61-62). This is the Jesus Christ, Son of God whose story Mark recounts and who is at the very centre of the *charism* of the community of believers. We leave Mark and pass on to the Gospel of Matthew.

The Gospel of Matthew

Messiah with a Difference

We turn to Matthew.⁵ We shall begin with the person of Jesus. There is no surprise for readers when they hear the risen Jesus saying: "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me..." (28:18). From the outset Matthew has repeatedly presented Jesus as the fulfillment of a whole complex thread of hopes rooted in the First Testament with the theme of Messiah/Son as the unifying factor. The earthquake is a vivid way of indicating the extraordinary presence of God and his power and the place of Jesus in the recreative history of the human family (27:54). The centurion's confession, "Truly this man was the Son of God" (27:54) and the women's worship (28:9) give expression to the unique place of Jesus Christ. However, as we read Matthew we must pay careful attention to the person to whom "all power in heaven and earth" has been given.

We are aware that *Dominus Jesus* responded to a grave danger in the eyes of some Christian leaders that Jesus Christ was being given a relative place in saving history. Interpretations of Christian belief which relativizes Jesus Christ within God's universal saving plan touch the very core of the *charism* of the community. However this core has many other crucial aspects to which we now wish to draw attention in Matthew's understanding. The royal Son of Man pictured in majestic and awesome glory strangely identifies himself with those who are most needy, have no honor in society and are even the refuse of society. This is not an exception in the Gospel. Admitting that the Father had given all things into his hands (11:27) and stating his unique revelatory responsibility, Jesus uses a wisdom background and identifies himself as the teacher who is nevertheless "gentle and lowly in heart" (11:29) in whom all can find wholeness (rest). Jesus is pictured as entering Jerusalem as the messianic Davidic King. However the strange term "humble" returns to add a different tone to the event. As one

⁵ Writing this article I read and was influenced by: Dorothy Jean Weaver, *Rewriting the Messianic Script: Matthew's Account of the Birth of Jesus*, in *Interpretation* 54(2000) 376-385 and Mark Allan Powell, "The Magi as Kings: An Adventure in Reader-Response Criticism" in *CBQ* 62(2000) 459-507.

author writes “Jesus exhibits a power characterized not by violence but vulnerability”⁶. As the term “humble” recurs so also the picture of Jesus as servant has an important place in Matthew. As healer, interpreter of the Sabbath and vanquisher of the power of the demonic world he is linked with the servant image (8:17; 12:17-21). Looking back over his life he reminds his disciples that he has been among them as one who serves and intends to give his life as a gift for others (20:28). Throughout his ministry Matthew portrays Jesus as authoritative and powerful in word, in his healing ministry and in his conflicts with opponents. He was aware that he could call upon the power of God at the outset of his passion (26:53) yet he chose vulnerability and powerlessness. There is hardly a word or sign of authority or power from the moment he enters the garden to pray to the moment he breathes his last in great anguish.

This is a part of the *charism* that the community of faith inherits, has to preserve, nourish and to which it must give witness. The community of faith as an institution and her many institutional expressions have been entrusted with this inheritance. However again the limits and sinfulness of culture and social structures so easily have a detrimental influence on the *charism*. I judge that *Dominus Jesus* could not have been a document coming out of the Council of the Community of believers or of an Episcopal Synod. However it is a document which can come from (a part of) bureaucracy.⁷ As many in Jesus’ day found it hard to accept the full picture of his altered messianic portrait so the community finds it hard today.

The Many Faces of Universality

This leads to another aspect of the *charism* on which we can reflect with Matthew as a basis, namely the universality of the community of faith. An interesting ecclesial experience happened in the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in New Delhi when Pope John Paul presented the synodal document, *Ecclesia in Asia* to the Church in Asia. Many Asians found the document foreign to their world of experience, speaking about that world and yet with

6 Weaver, *Rewriting the Messianic Script*, p.383.

7 I am using a sociological term. It is often useful to see sacred bodies from the perspective of the social sciences. The departments of the Vatican make up a bureaucracy with their ministers at the head of departments and secretaries, under secretaries.... It is very difficult for them not to act in ways which are conditioned by the world in which they operate. Cardinal Konig touched upon some of these issues in *My Vision of the Church of the Future* in *Tablet*, (1199) 424-26.

the experience of non participants. The Cardinal Archbishop of Jakarta responded. The document was the fruit of the Synod of Asian Bishops but filtered through departments of an international bureaucracy and marked by the thought and language and socio-cultural conditioning of non-Asians to a very large extent. However, an Asian in ways with which Asians present in the Cathedral could resonate the same interpreted document⁸. The universality of the community of believers demands a very vibrant and active community of particular or local communities of faith.

Matthew presents the universality of Jesus' ministry that in a way was concentrated on the "lost sheep of the house of Israel" and yet found God present and alive in men and women who never did or ever would belong to the house of Israel. Yet these were to sit at the table with Abraham bringing their diversity of religious experience (8:11). The universality of mission pervades the Gospel and is so obviously a key element in the *charism*. It is part and parcel of the reinterpretation of messianism. The servant like figures of the Magi from the East stand at the beginning of the story (2:1-12), the background to the whole ministry of Jesus is given by means of a singular interpretation of Jesus' choice of Capernaum as the base for his Galilean ministry where he is pictured as light in the darkness of the Gentile world (4:13-16). At a moment of intense opposition and crisis touching the very heart of his ministry the author turns again to Isaiah and re-affirms the universality of the mission (12:17-20). At the climax of the narrative Jesus who had spurned the gift of the world from the hand of Satan (4:8-10) entrusts to his disciples a universal responsibility. He had journeyed through the Cross to his place as Lord of the Universe.

We must again look at some other aspects of this universality, which we may not see as integral to the *charism*. Having entered the Temple we are told blind and lame came to him and he healed them. First of all they ought not to have been there. Also children enter this narrative acknowledging him as the messiah to the pique of the leadership. These two groups represent the marginal in Jewish society. As the Son of Man in glory he identifies with many categories of the most needy and forgotten (25:31-36). In a like manner in his reply to John's messengers Jesus draws their attention to the signs that manifest that he is the "one who is to come", recalling those who have benefited from his healing power (11:2-6). We could list the texts in

8 The Papal address and the Cardinal's response can be found in *Vidyajyoti* 63 (1999) 881-84.887-91.

which the least, little ones, servants, the last, children and the meek were the focus of Jesus' concern. Normally we understand references to "gentiles" as texts about the universality of the mission. Perhaps we miss the other aspect. In the religion and culture of Jesus' people the Gentiles are the marginalized, outsiders and beyond the pale of salvation. This is a further category of universality.

There is another category. They are those beyond the pale of "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" who as women and men of faith will never belong to Israel and probably never became members of the Jesus movement. I refer to the Canaanite woman (15: 21-28), the two Roman centurions (8: 5-13; 27:54), the many women and men of faith from East and West who will sit at Abraham's table while the children are excluded (8:11-12), those who give cups of water (10:42), Mark's exorcist who does not belong to the Jesus' group (Mk 9:38-40), and all those just men and women presumably belonging to many diverse religious histories pictured in the parables of the final coming of the Son of Man and judgement (13:36-43, 47-50; 24:29-34; 25:1-46). Presumably there are Christians who think that all of those who "enter the kingdom of God" will be Christians! We come face to face in these texts with the universality of God who is active in and through Jesus Christ in many religions beyond the pale of any Christian denomination. The community of faith is challenged to recognize this universality of God the Father in Jesus Christ in ways beyond the limits of *Dominus Jesus*. At times the community of faith can share the attitude of John who objected to the strange exorcist or be scandalized by the Canaanite woman and the Centurions, great models of faith for the disciples.

Cultural Universality

A further aspect inherent in the universality in the *charism* entrusted to the Church can be illustrated by a short text. In the Matthean context, when Jesus' reflects on questions about the "end", he concludes at one point with this observation: "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations..." (24:14). Praising the woman whose anointing was so deeply symbolic he remarked solemnly: "Truly I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her" (26:13). This universality of the Gospel demands socio-cultural specificity to be intelligible, to be effective and enable celebration. The institutional dimension of the community may find this type of universality very threatening at times and the present tensions about the re-expression of many aspects of the

charism in African, Asian and other cultural matrices witness to this. Institution is essential and yet *charism* can never be imprisoned in any cultural and historical expressions.

Loyalty to God

We wish now to turn to the teaching of Jesus and comment on it as part of the *charism*. Within the Gospel which underlines Jesus' role as authoritative Teacher we choose one significant text:

When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" He said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets (22:34-40).

Obviously we are dealing here with the core of the *charism* entrusted by Jesus to the community of faith in so far as his teaching is concerned. The term "love" would be better translated by "be devoted to" or "be committed to" or "be loyal to" or "be attached to". This uncompromising commitment to God can be illustrated in Jesus' responses to the tempter summarized in his "You shall worship the Lord your God and him only you shall serve" (4:10) and his repeated prayer in the garden, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want" and "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done" (26:39.42). This undivided commitment to God as Father comprises the first part of the prayer that Jesus gifted to his community (6:9-13) and is the mark of identity of his disciples (12:49). Maybe we have not noticed how Jesus underlines this point when a searching young man asked him about the path to eternal life. He clearly distances himself from the honor given him by the questioner and reminds the young man that "one there is who is good" (19:17). This commitment to God is inseparable from "hunger and thirst for righteousness" and his teaching about finding the will of God and doing it (5:6; 7:21-23). This passionate devotion to the Father comes to expression in symbolic ways when Jesus uses the images of the treasure in the heart, the soundness of the eye, and undivided service which wealth can so easily interrupt and corrupt (6:19-24). We recall the short story about the need to surrender all to gain the hidden treasure and precious pearl (13: 44-46). The normal

practices of piety are to be deeply personal moments with the Father (6:1-18); the more anxious moments of life like the search for basic needs (we remember the socio-economic world of Jesus with subsistence agriculture, debt, loss of land, heavy taxation) are also to lead to a deep devotion to the Father (6:25-33). Jesus reminds the people that the Father knows "that you need them" and therefore says "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness (will)..." (6:32-33).

In this context we could recall the critique of religion he made. First of all he critiqued the typical practices of devotion to God as alms, prayer and fasting. Socio-cultural pressures in so many ways corrupt *Charism*. The very interpretation of the Law led to discrimination by creating exclusive groups (the righteous). Jesus contrasted mercy with sacrifice, again *charism* with institution. Further more commenting on reconciliation, he insists that reconciliation relativizes the very offering of your gift at the altar, another example of charism and institution coming into conflict. I am not sure where to place the harsh criticisms of the institutional practices of the movement of the Pharisees where the practices that had attempted to give expression to devotion to God and embody aspects of the charism of the Jewish religious experience went to seed. They are characterized as hypocrisy (23:16-26- swearing by gold in the Temple; tithes which are more important than justice, mercy and loyalty; purity yet inner corruption goes unnoticed).

Loyalty to the Other

The second part of the answer concerns love of the neighbour as yourself. This requires to be situated in that cultural world. The primary unit of relationship was the family. The loyalty and commitment of a person to the family was to be as total as possible. The person is to be committed to the neighbour with a loyalty normally reserved for the family and in a way that assumes the other into the family. However Jesus also created a new family in which the basis of relationship is the one Father and his daughters and sons are to imitate his universal commitment to all, including the good and the bad, enemy and friend. The members are to mirror the forgiveness of the Father (18:21-35) and be particularly concerned about the least and the vulnerable (25:31-46). To be able to love the neighbour the believer needs to receive as gifts the attitudes spelt out in the Beatitudes.

There is a consistent radical nature to Jesus' teaching, nevertheless he assures his followers that "my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (11:30). The institutional expressions of *charism* must ensure that the radicality is

preserved and yet the yoke and burden be easy and light. The kernel of Jesus' teaching is a series of basic attitudes and ways of living which reveal to the world the heart and face of the Father. Jesus as the Son reveals this Father. The community of disciples is called to be leaven, salt and light in their environment that others may "praise the Father in heaven" (5:13-16). He captures the orientation of Jesus' teaching in the challenging invitation, "be you perfect (whole) as your heavenly Father is perfect" (5:48). What an immense and permanent "burden" for the community of believers as an institution. This demands continual institutional conversion.

Faith and Little Faith

By contrast we can highlight how faith namely the quality of trust, loyalty and commitment to God in Jesus Christ is a key element in *charism*. In a series of texts which deal with crises in the disciples' lives Matthew's Jesus in a way less harsh than Mark's which underlines their fragile loyalty and trust using the phrase "little faith" (6:30;8:26; 14:31; 16:8 and doubt in 28:17). In contrast we encounter the models of faith in his typically sparse narratives of the sick (9:2.22.28-29). Jesus was also struck with awe before the faith of the Gentile centurion and woman (8:10; 15:28). He leaves the disciples with the memory of the figtree and his words:

When the disciples saw it, they were amazed, saying, "How did the fig tree wither at once?" Jesus answered them, "Truly I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only will you do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' it will be done. Whatever you ask for in prayer with faith, you will receive" (21:20-22).

Leadership in the Community of Faith

We can move from this challenge to the whole areas of leadership. We have also discussed this point in Mark. We will study the interplay between *charism* and institution in this important area. Leadership is inseparable from an authentic grasp of who Jesus is and from a committed loyalty to him. It is a gift and is intertwined with the very foundation of the community of faith and Jesus' assurance of its permanence in the face of all hostile powers. Leadership entails the authority and responsibility to protect and hand on the teaching of Jesus Christ the Son of God and the authentic traditions of the community (Mt 16:13-20; 18:18). Another text sequence which is important for the study of leadership occurs earlier in the Gospel. Matthew very carefully presents Jesus as Messiah. Having given the scope of his life's

work (4:17) he creates two summaries to open his narration of Jesus as the authoritative teacher and creative healer. The two texts are important (4:23-25; 9:35-28). We quote them:

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people. So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought to him all the sick, those who were afflicted with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, and paralytics, and he cured them. And great crowds followed him from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and from beyond the Jordan (4:23-25).

In between this text and its parallel Matthew enables his readers to hear the good news of the reign of God and experience the healing and creative power of this reign transforming lives (Chs. 5-7.8-9). He concludes the vivid narrative of the messianic mission, underlining Jesus' compassion and his deep concern for the future. Compassion and the type of the people who gathered round Jesus in this text and in other circumstances are inherent to the *charism* of the community (cf. 11:2-6; 14:14.34-36; 15:30-32; 21:14). The institution is so deeply conditioned by socio-economic forces of different periods that often the crowds who gathered around Jesus do not come to and gather in the community of faith as they do not feel accepted. At the end of the majestic presentation of Jesus in ministry, in the second text Matthew looks to the future:

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest (9:35-38).

The prominent themes of 4:23-25 recur with addition of the metaphor of the harvest and laborers. These are the future leaders. Again leadership and the foundation of the community coincide as Matthew describes the choice of the Twelve (10:2-4). We draw attention to the similarity in mission and the extensive authority given to these men over all sickness and unclean spirits as well as the proclamation of the Kingdom.

Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment (10:1.5-8).

We now turn to the characteristics of leadership which are part of the *charism* and embodied in the institutional dimension of the community. This embodiment is necessary and yet potentially dangerous to *charism*.

The Challenges to Leadership

In this area the cultural values which are embedded in the social structure of society clearly affect those who are entrusted with leadership roles in the Church and affect the *charism* to various degrees and in visible ways. In Matthew Jesus addresses the problems of status, honor and "greatness" on three occasions. In the instructions rising out of leadership in the community (Ch.18), immediately following the ambitious request of the mother of the sons of Zebedee (10:20-28) and in the extended critique of the Scribes and Pharisees (23:1-12). There are three culturally conditioned and highly evocative symbols used to convey the *charism*, "child," "servant," and "slave of all". Another cultural symbol of the *charism* occurs in Jesus' use of the phrase "you are all brothers" (23:8). In the family of Jesus' disciples no one is to be given any title. He excludes the traditional titles of Teacher (Rabbi), father and master and introduces a vibrant and fundamental equality as the mark of the community. Going further Jesus embodied the *charism* in his own example as the servant who surrenders his life for the good of others. Titles, precedents, marks of honor, power games, ambition are definitely ruled out.

Another danger linked to culture is the power of appearances. Appearance is more fundamental than reality. Jesus stripped off this façade in a merciless way. He pointed out how the leaders have to be committed to a continual concern about appearances (23:5-7; 6:1-18), a basic attitude of insincerity and narrowness apparent in the gap between teaching and practice (23:3-4) and their efforts to preserve the façade of righteousness in outward signs like tithes and purity laws. The image of "whitewashed tombs,

full of bones of the dead and all uncleanness" (23:23-28) indicated how troubled Jesus was about the potential problem of the institution. Another constant challenge to leadership is the quality of their teaching and interpretation of God's will where casuistry can kill truth (23:16-24).

The emphasis on the proclamation and interpretation of the Word perhaps fits more appropriately in the study of Luke. However we shall mention here how the Word preserved in the written Scriptures is a core element of the *charism*. Its interpretation and proclamation demands institutional bodies and roles. That the Word be a living Word responsive to the search, questions and needs of each generation and that it be appropriately interpreted is a responsibility of the community as institution. Much could be written about the quality of interpretation, homiletics, catechesis and the lack of contextual and culturally appropriate interpretation.

Because leadership is so easily associated with power and prestige there is the inherent danger of indifference to or contempt for the "little one" and scant regard for others who are easily lead astray. Jesus addressed this problem also (18: 6-14). The *charism* comes to expression in the story of the shepherd searching for one of a hundred sheep. Finally to forgive and above all else to seek reconciliation and incorporation of all members within the community is not what culture easily teaches leaders. Jesus goes to great pains to insist on these qualities (18:15-35).

Even the Hairs of your Head are all numbered

A further aspect of the *charism* is the reality of rejection, conflict, persecution and martyrdom. This point is elaborated in the opening manifesto enshrined in the Beatitudes (5:11-12) and in Jesus' long instruction about the future experiences of those in leadership roles and of the whole community of disciples (10:14-15.16-24.34-39; 24: 9-14). The *charism* is enshrined in the image of the "sword" which Jesus brings, in the sayings about the disciple being like the master, taking up the cross, losing life, the sheep in a world of wolves and the ancestors' experience (10:34. 24-25. 38. 16; 5:12). A fascinating study related to this theme of rejection is the way a consistent campaign is carried on to denigrate Jesus and destroy his standing with the people throughout the narrative of Matthew and the other Gospels. The passion narrative is the climax of this process in which a consistent process of "status degradation" is described, aimed at destroying Jesus' status and labeling him as a deviant person.⁹ Coupled with the assurance that "you

9 Malina, Social Science Commentary, pp.159-160.

“will be hated by all” and betrayal will even be part of family life, there is the reassurance of God’s continued presence (10:19-20, 28-30). We now make some soundings about our theme in Luke.

The Gospel of Luke

The God of Jesus Christ

We shall begin with a consideration of the God of Jesus Christ in Luke. The relationship of God to Jesus of Nazareth is very clear in Paul and John and we will not develop this aspect. We will highlight some of the ways God is portrayed in Luke. We begin with a key statement of Jesus more often identified with Matthew and a recurring major theme in John. Jesus says: “All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him” (10:22). We shall see how the Lucan Jesus reveals the Father. We digress and include a scene from Matthew. He pictures God who is a constant headache to administrators and institutions as he is gracious to a point of stupidity giving the same wages to men who worked one hour as those who worked for a full day (20:1-15). He is a dangerous God who disregards the basic socio-religious distinction between Jew and Gentile and the whole cultural system of first and last (13:30; Mt 20:16; 19: 30).

More interesting is the shameless God who flouts all norms of honor and shame and the social norms pictured in the narrative of the father who receives back his profligate son whose life has brought such shame on the whole family as the elder brother rightly insists. Again the same God is not only shameless but also actually celebrates the return of the Son, the finding of the sheep and lost coin. As Son Jesus is anointed and commits himself consistently to the least, he includes all types of people within his fellowship and is as concerned about women as about men. In this he reflects an image of God which breaks beyond the horizons of the cultural norms and religious expectations.

With Whom do we find Jesus?

An obvious aspect of the charism which Luke emphasizes is that Jesus is a friend of tax collectors and sinners. This is underlined by means of his sharing of meals. Meals in his culture were a microcosm of ordinary social relations and with whom you ate was crucial in the eyes of many. His association with toll collectors (Zacchaeus’ title was chief tax collector) and

other disreputable types was quite correctly a great scandal (5:30; 7:34; 7:39;15:1-2;19:7). Jesus strongly defended his decisions and defended sinners. His association was purposeful, as one of the ways he mediated his Father's forgiveness to others and revealed this aspect of the divine. His association was an integral part of his re-integration of marginalized people into the community and their rehabilitation. The criticism of the Pharisees and Scribes, and Jesus' choice of a Pharisee to contrast with the toll collector (18:9-14) are a warning to all who are identified with the institution. It is very difficult for the Church as an institution to be the sacrament of this scandalous socio-cultural orientation of Jesus' ministry. He has bequeathed it to the community as a precious part of its charism.

A complementary aspect is the constant portrayal of Jesus as the hope of the socio-economically marginalized. In the opening statement of Jesus' *charism* Luke underlines that he is sent to bring life and hope (good news) to the poor. In his first teaching Jesus singles out the poor, hungry and grief stricken, assuring them of the special concern of his God (6:20-23). Jesus is questioned whether he is really the "one to come", the one who brings hope rooted in God's loyalty. At this point the narrator in a most awkward fashion states: "In that hour he cured many of disease and bodily illnesses, and evil spirits..." before Jesus provides his own credentials in a list of the marginalized who have experienced good news (7:18-23). The scene of the bereaved widow prefaces this teaching (7:11-17). We find this concern in his stories about the wretched man at the rich man's gate, the bent woman, the widow seeking justice from the heartless judge, his list of most unwelcome guests to be invited (14:12-14) and all those who are not just the poor but the riff-raff whom he has hustled into his Father's banquet (14:21-23). He is the voice of those unheard and he sees those invisible as those of institutional importance. His terse promise with its implicit warning "Blessed is he who is not scandalized by me" is directed at the institutional character of the community of disciples.

Aligned to this orientation is Jesus consistent awareness of the great danger of wealth that brings power, status and influence. We would wish that overwhelming agrarian structure of the economy of Jesus' day and the "limited goods" nature of the economy would dilute his teaching for economic systems of the modern world. In his period and world there had to be injustice within the family history of any wealthy family and person. Though the radical character of Jesus' teaching is socially very unacceptable today in the Church, yet if we analyze any aspect of his teaching we will find it shares the same radical nature and is **always** socially unacceptable. We learn

of his perception of wealth from a series of scenes: the “Woes” pronounced on the rich, satisfied, party goers and socially acceptable families (6:24- 26); the story of the wealthy family of whom one brother dies (16: 19-31); his harshness to the man getting the worse on an inheritance dispute (12:13-21) and the Pharisees portrayed as mocking Jesus’ pithy saying “You cannot serve God and mammon” who earn the unenviable epithet of “lovers of money” (16:13.14). In this small scene attachment to wealth is linked up with self righteousness and social honor(16:15). In two juxtaposed scenes we could suggest that we have aspects of the institution and of *charism* face to face. In one scene the Scribes are paranoid about honor and status, are religious hypocrites who take advantage of the most vulnerable. They represent the dangers inherent in the institution. In the other we gaze at the widow with her single coin. She lives the *charism* of the Gospel . (20:45-47. 21:1-4).

Probably Luke’s insistence in his “call” narratives to “leave all”(5:11.28; 14:33; 18:22.28) can be aligned with Jesus’ personal identification with the poor having nowhere to lay his head, the ease with which the marginalized approached him and his attitude to wealth.

The Spirit and Jesus endowed with power

Though in the Acts the centrality of the Holy Spirit to *charism* stands out so clearly we wish to include this aspect of the *charism* in our consideration of this Gospel. John is filled with the Spirit from birth while Jesus is created by the power of the Spirit. Jesus is gifted with the same Spirit as he enters into his mission (1:15. 35; 3:22). We are told that Jesus was full of the Spirit, guided by the Spirit and empowered by the Spirit (4:1.14.18). The same Spirit pervades the origin narrative, a prophetic and guiding Spirit. In his last words to the disciples Jesus tells them to wait in Jerusalem for this gift (24:49). The Spirit is associated with the power of God. Before we turn to Luke’s insistence on the re-creative power with which Jesus had been gifted we add a comment about the institution. The many organs of administration and their structures under the influence of their very nature and the socio-cultural world of bureaucracy are often resistant to the Spirit. Yet the Spirit must have as it were an institutional body to function.

More than the other Gospel writers Luke highlights the power with which Jesus was gifted. Echoing the opening description of Jesus as he enters his ministry “in the power of the Spirit” and anointed by the Spirit (4:18) Luke notes in a panoramic summary that “the crowds sought to touch him, for power came forth from him and he healed all”(6:19). Earlier Luke had made

the same observation (5:17) and Jesus himself noted that “ I experienced that power has gone forth from me” (8:46). Without explicitly referring to “power” Luke describes the experiences of this power in three scenes of extreme human helplessness. We refer to the storm in which Jesus commands wind and water to the astonishment of the disciples (8:25); his game with the legion of unclean spirits, causing panic among those present (8:37); and his action as Lord of incurable sickness and death (8:40-55; cf. 7:16). The centurion recognizes that Jesus has extra ordinary power (7:7-8). The experience of his power shocked religious leaders when he forgave sins in God’s name (5:20-24; 7:49). This power cannot be separated from naked faith (8:25.48.50; 7:9.50). This power of God gifted to Jesus Christ has to be seen and experienced in the community of believers. The institution is to give witness to the extraordinary power, the re-creative and unique power of Jesus Christ and the Spirit. The danger is that this power will be manipulated in ways so that it becomes a power that dominates and that does not foster and nourish the other aspect of “power” which is the power of faith.

We could continue to describe more and more aspects of the *charism*, We could have included the quality of joy, gratitude, hope and praise, the wonder of being children of God the Father - endangered at times by the fixation on sinfulness - and the depth of prayer to which all are invited in order to plumb the riches of the gift of being in Christ and temples of the Holy Spirit.

We conclude by suggesting a reading of the explanation of the parable of the seed (Lk 8:11-15). The seed/ word of God is the *charism*. Those along the path/ on the rock/ that fell among the thorns and in good soil are the community of believers as institution. The last group hears the word, holds the word / *charism* in an honest and good heart, and bears fruit with patient endurance. We grieve over the ways the *charism* is without fruit and rejoice that the institution is the mother of thirty, sixty and hundred fold of goodness within the history of the great human family.

The community of believers, the Church, as institution is like the man who found the treasure in the field and the trader who came upon a priceless pearl, both images of the *charism*. The prophetic live voices of women and men sent by God and yet often not recognized in their time invite the community to sell all to possess the treasure and pearl.

Institution vs Charism Johannine Perspectives

Augustine Mulloor

This study focusses attention on the most important moments in the fourth Gospel where the relationship between charism and institution is crystallized in forms of opposition and integration. The attention is centred on Jesus and the Temple (Chs. 2:7-10) and then on “the birth from above” (Ch.3). Jesus reinterprets the institution charismatically.

Introduction

Johannine Jesus is very provocative in his speech and action, in speech in the conversations with the Jewish leaders and in action in the process of reinterpretation of the meaning of religious Institutions. Jesus faces the leaders and provocatively and prophetically makes it clear that their function is to accelerate the Charismatic dynamic movement within the religion and that instead they have blocked the flow of the spirit. Jesus challenges the institutions which had become the instruments of exploitation, corruption, idole worship and division. Religion then, through the leaders and the institutions they protected and in which they found their own security, had promoted a drift between institutions and charism. Jesus’ prophetic, subversive attitude, teaching and action were intended to show that authentic religion will stand for institution *and* Charism and not for institution *versus* charism.

Questioning ourselves we realize that our Church represents an institution that spends most of its energy to promote institutionalization. The Church thus stands mostly for the “ekstasis” obliterating the “enstasis” which ought to be the nucleus and point of convergence and emergence of the “ekstasis”. The “*roopa*” has been identified as “*bhava*” and hence any prophetic subversive movement is considered a retreat to the misconceived essentials of religion. When the non-essentials are beatified, the “power”

will become the criterion of understanding and judgement within religion and naturally a prophet will be checked, blocked, banned and got rid of as a rebel and threat to orthodoxy. Hence to reflect in an evaluative way about "Charism and / versus institution" is to answer the questions arising in our minds about our life of religion: How to make a proper harmony between institution and charism? How could the institutions be made charismatic? How could the charism be expressed through the institution?

The aim of this study is to reread the fourth Gospel from this thematic perspective, taking the most important and directly connected texts like the temple event in 2: 13-25; 3: 1-21 and chs. 7-10.

Trade or Prayer? (Jn 2: 13-25)

Chapter 2 of the Gospel is a synthesis of its message presented through two events of the ministry of Jesus, the changing of water into wine and cleansing of the temple. The evangelist has imposed an introductory function on these events which have the geographical context of Galilee to Jerusalem which embraces the whole ministry of Jesus, the thematic context of the demands "to take away" and "to fill up", two basic attitudes during the ministry of Jesus. This introductory or exordial function explains also why an event which in all probability happened at the end of the ministry of Jesus is placed by John at the very beginning of the ministry, namely the cleansing of the temple (2: 13-25). In the synoptic tradition this follows the Solemn entry of Jesus in the city of Jerusalem (Mk 11: 1-19 and the parallels). John has separated both the events. The Solemn entry is placed in chapter 12 at the end of the book of signs (12: 1f) and the temple event is at the beginning of the book of signs in chapter 2.

'Temple' is the most important religious institution of Jews. As God is one and unique, so also the temple is single. This divine institution, no one has any authority to speak against except God himself. It is the very symbol and culture of Jewish religion which is based on God's choice to have a covenant relationship with Israel, God being their God and they being God's people. The temple is the crystallization of the experience of the people that this God is dwelling with them in their midst which is the guarantee and expression of the fidelity of the compassionate God. The temple should in the ideal sense, lead the people to the experience of God's living and committed dynamic presence invigorating their life making it the witness to a living faith that is liberative. In other words, the temple should embody the very spirit or charism of the Jewish religion.

When Isaiah said "... these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer, their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar, for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples" (56:7), he was articulating the purpose of the temple in the ideal sense, which shall be realized at the messianic time. So it means more than a structure and more than an institution.

The theme of the new covenant has been already introduced in the preceding section. The event at Cana, the first sign of Jesus is the beginning of the process of the ratification of the new covenant to be fully accomplished in the "hour" - passion, death and resurrection of Jesus. The presence of abundant wine that replaces water in the jars of purification, in the context of "wedding" that symbolizes the covenant relationship "on the third day" like God appeared on mount Sinai on the third day (Ex 19: 1f), the message implied is surely "the new covenant". It is the theophany, Jesus manifesting his glory, i.e. his divinity, with which the process of the new covenant fulfillment has begun. So what happens in the temple immediately after this cannot be interpreted if not, in direct connection with the Cana event.

When Jesus comes to the temple, the situation there does not correspond to the ideal purpose: "people selling cattle, sheep and doves and money changers seated at their tables". The trade inside the temple, promoted in the name of religion, directly or indirectly participated by the religious leaders and priests marks and signifies the exploitative nature that the religion has acquired. What should have facilitated the movement of the Spirit of the living God leading to deep communion based on mercy, justice and faith has become a life-less, unjust, corrupt system and structure out of which the leaders were reaping profit for themselves.

Hence the reaction of Jesus is the invitation for the reinterpretation of the temple going back to the ideal and thus fulfilling the prophecy of Zachariah: "And there shall no longer be traders in the house of the Lord of hosts on that day" (14 : 21). The disciples understood the meaning of the violent action of Jesus as the "Zeal for your house..." as the Psalmist says "the Zeal for your house will devour me" (Ps 69: 9). It does remind the reader of the action of Jeremiah described in Ch. 7 of his book. The prophet stood at the gate of the temple blocking all those who wanted to go in to pray. Prophet gave his oracle exposing the discrepancy and discordance between their prayer and actual life in the society. The prayer, for them, had no influence on their actual life which was filled with stealing, murder, adultery false

swearing, exploitation of the widows, oppression of aliens, orphans etc. (Jer 7: 1f). The temple has become the incarnation of an irrelevant institution, in perfect opposition to Charism.

That this event in the temple took place in connection with the passover feast adds to the significance. The feasts are celebrated to remember the salvific and liberative interventions of God and thus to relive them as source of new life and dynamism. Jesus, through the prophetic, symbolic action inside the temple manifested the significance of real passover, to be realized through his death which is the real remembrance to be celebrated in the new temple.

Hence, the prediction about the distinction of the present temple and the rebuilding in three days become very relevant (2: 19). The contrast between institution and charism is evident in the reaction of the Jews. They are preoccupied about the external structure of the temple. Jesus, transcending it, speaks about the spiritual, interior dimension of the temple, which is actually the very dead and risen Jesus, the living embodiment of the real passover.

Jesus is not against the temple itself as an institution but wants this institution itself to be charismatic. Jesus uses the language of the structure of a house, rooms and places but only to refer to the deep interior communion with the Father which the disciples will experience. The word field of the vocabulary is that of a building: "Father's house, many rooms, a place" (Jn 14: 1-6). This relationship with the Father through faith in Jesus is an intimate, interior one, as between vine and branches (Jn 15: 1-6). The commandment of the new covenant is, therefore, new because it is based on the law written in the heart in fulfillment of the prophecy of Jeremiah in 31: 31f: "... then, I will write my law in their hearts". It is the commandment of love modelled after the universal unconditional love of Jesus, all inclusive and universal including even enemies articulated through the service of washing one another's feet (Jn 13:1-30). The authentic temple as a "charismatic institution" will promote the worship of the Father "in spirit and truth" (Jn 4: 23), namely accepting Jesus as the revealer of the Father and the revelation of the Father, the new temple, that guarantees the fidelity of God to the new covenant.

From Above or From Below? (Jn 3: 1-21)

The dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus exemplifies the option of Jesus for institution and charism and against institution versus charism. Nicodemus, a Pharisee and a leader of the Jews represents the traditions of

Jewish faith systematically fossilized. Nicodemus and all those who belong to that group ("we") are quite sure about their position and they do not see any possibility for a different or alternative way. Their moulds were, fixed, beatified and eternalized.

Hence the revelation Jesus gives which cannot fit into their traditional categories invites surprise and wonderment because "to be born again" i.e; "to be born from above" through the power of God's spirit, through the sacrament of Baptism (water), represents the dynamic, changing, flexible, open, docile and constantly moving. Thereby Jesus was presenting the traditional Jewish faith bringing it to its radical authenticity and original spiritual, religious dynamism.

Nicodemus understands the teaching of Jesus from earthly, worldly, "below", fleshy point of view. How can a spiritual, heavenly, "above" reality be contained in such a frame? The heart of religious experience is the encounter with the spirit at the core of one's being and the resultant transformed existence. It is paramount to being possessed by the spirit and being led by the spirit. Such a person will become totally unpredictable and hence charismatic. He is ever willing to learn new revelations and is open to risks involved in treading unknown paths in the darkness of faith.

This is, as we found in the temple event, the realization of the design of God about new covenant community centered on the spirit. The members of the new community have a fleshy heart in the place of heart of stone (Ez 36: 22f) on which the interior law of the spirit is written (Jer 31: 31f) and they prophecy always and all of them, young, old and the children (Joel 2: 28f).

What is the expression of this dynamism emerging from its source the spirit? It is love of God for the whole world manifested in the death of the Son (Jn 3: 16). A person who experiences this unconditional and universal love that is the motivating power behind "the handing over" of the only Son by the Father to the enemies for death becomes dynamically or charismatically "agapeic".

Jesus' teaching to Nicodemus is a reinterpretation of Jewish religion leading it to the core, namely, charismatic experience which should pervade and penetrate every institutional expression making them the source of zealous life. This is the challenge placed before Nicodemus and all that he represents.

In the Temple, for a New Temple (Jn 7-10)

John uses Jewish feasts as the background for presenting the revelations of Jesus and thereby reinterprets them. Even these feasts had, in the course of time, become institutionalized and thus ceremonial, ritualistic, irrelevant and life-less.

The feast of the Tabernacles is the context in which Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem is presented by Jn in Chs. 7-10. The four major revelations of Jesus - "come to me and drink...", I am the light of the world, I am the door, I am the good shepherd - and the narration of two events - the woman caught in adultery and the healing of the man born blind - and the controversies with the Jewish leaders have the setting of the temple, during the feast of Tents. Jesus' teaching, action and the debates and disputes are both the assertions of the option for charism against institution and the attempts to charismatize the institutions like temple and feasts.

Jesus' cry on the last day of the feast inside the temple is contrasted with the ceremony of prayer for rain or prosperity. Procession with the water from the fountain of Gihon was considered the source of prosperity. Jesus through his teaching revealed that God as being revealed in his mission is the fountain of life and prosperity (Jer 2: 13; Is 55: 1f). Characterizing himself as living water, Jesus crystallized his salvific significance in the world for the world. The relationship to God through deep faith in Jesus Christ is the core of new religion. This experience above will divest religion of its irrelevant ceremonies and rituals. Through this, Jesus presented himself as the true God whose presence fills the new temple. This is the continuation and progressive radicalization of the event in Jerusalem in Ch. 2.

The revelation about the light is to be contrasted with the ceremony of lighting the lamps in the court of the temple (Jn 8: 12). An empty ceremony and a superficial satisfaction that the city has been illuminated through these lamps represents the institutions that have become barren. Jesus is the light that enlightens the whole world (Ps 36, 9; 27, 1). So Jesus is God himself and he is the one in whom the religions and their institutions have to find the point of convergence and emergence.

The healing of the blind man is the confirmation of this message. It revolves around pretension to know and to see by the pharisees (Jn 9: 24) contrasted with the "I-do-not-know" attitude of the man born blind (Jn 9: 12, 25, 36). The triumph of charism over the institution is dramatically presented in the attempt of the man to teach the Jewish leaders (Jn 9: 30-33). Their

reaction reflects very well that their secure caves have been shaken: "They answered him: you were born in the utter sin and are you trying to teach us? (Jn 9: 34). This paradox of the teachers being taught is climaxed in the words of Jesus: "I came into the world for judgement; so that those who do not see may see and those who see may become blind. ... if you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say "we see", your sin remains" (Jn 9: 39-41).

In the teachings on gate and shepherd, the temple theme remains the pivotal point. Jesus is the door to the temple and at the same time he himself is the temple. That Jesus is the good shepherd is also the revelation of his being the charism of religion. Jesus through self sacrifice gives life to the sheep. The relationship between shepherd and sheep involves dynamic, personal mutual knowledge of each other (Jn. 10: 1-17).

The movements with regard to gate or shepherd are similar to exodus event and its dynamism: "going out/ leading out; bring in / lead in". It is equal to going inside the temple or coming out of God's presence. Jesus, being the gate or shepherd is facilitating the experience of salvation by being in communion with the Father. This is the source of the charismatic life of a believer. Jesus transcends the institutions and Jesus himself is a living, dynamic and charismatic presence of the institution.

Finally the attitude of Jesus to the woman caught in adultery (Jn 7: 53-81), shows how he transcends institutions of the law. The men who brought her to Jesus represents the fossilized institution of the law in the literal external sense. Jesus, in contrast to their eagerness to fulfill the letter of the law, opts for the heart of the woman. He was interested in judging her on the basis of the situation of her heart. Thus, while standing against the institution, Jesus reinterprets the institution of the law from the radical spiritual level.

Conclusion

The climax of this teaching regarding charism versus institution or charismatic institution is found in the scene of Jesus' death (Jn 19: 25-34), where the spirit emerges in the form of water from the pierced side of Jesus who was dead already. it is revealed that the charism is the essential aspect of religion. Jesus who with the satisfaction of having fulfilled all and every plan of the Father, offers his last drop of life by giving up the spirit bowing

down and letting the last drop of blood, the symbol of life flow out (Jn 19: 25-34). The charismatic centrality is thus manifested in the very death of Jesus.

This is the challenge for the church today, to recognize the centrality of charism against institutions and to reinterpret the institutions charismatically. The church is called to become charismatic in its life and expressions, enstasis and ekstasis. More urgent is the need to charismatize the institutions by charismatizing the leaders, and every member. Is the church willing to take the risk of becoming blind, of being born again, of losing the security of trade and business, of dying to release the spirit?

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Institution vs Charism in the Pauline Vision

Mathew Thekkakara

After clarifying the concept of charism in Paul, Mathew Thekkakara proceeds to show its relationship to institution. First Pauline Charism *versus* institution is explored and then Pauline Charism *and* institution. In the Pauline vision, charism and institution work together. Charism led to the formation of communities which have a mission led by the Holy Spirit, beyond the law and other institutions.

We are concerned about the relationship between Institution and Charism in the Pauline vision. This vision is possible only through an exploration into the vast field of Pauline literature. In this essay we shall limit ourselves to a mere exploration into the various aspects of the theme. We can begin it by exploring the meaning of Charism.

1. Charism

Charism (*charisma*) consists of a free gift, a spiritual capacity resulting from God's grace (*charis*). Charism, used specially by Paul, "refers to a dazzling variety of gifts....In every case the charism is consciously received as a gift from God."¹ Charism indicates the total gift of salvation received by all believers (Rom 5:15-16; 6:23). The Spirit dwells in us, but is not owned by us. Each person has received a particular gift from God (1Cor 7:7,17;12:7), which has to be used for the benefit of others. The office conferred by the laying on of hands is considered to be a charism (1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6-7). Paul considers celibacy (1 Cor 7:7) and mutual encouragement through witness to faith (Rom 1:11) to be charismatic gifts. Prophecy, wisdom, knowledge, extraordinary faith, healing, working of miracles, speaking in tongues and its interpretation and so on are considered as charisms. The endurance of suffering can itself be a special gift (2 Cor 4:7-12; Phil 1:29; Col 1:24; Jn 18:11).

1. J. Koenig, *Charismata: God's Gifts for God's People* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978) 124.

The saving work of God is accomplished through people whom God has gifted. God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; he went about doing good and healing all" (Acts 10:38). Paul recognizes that the "gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (Rom 11:28-29). God has chosen to continue the work of Jesus through his disciples and through the Church. Every member of the Church is called to share actively in this work, and therefore each has been empowered by the spirit with a particular gift. In the initial communities the charisms indicated in the New Testament continued to be present and recognized which had a unique role. In the later centuries there was no great flourishing of charisms in the body of the faithful. The Second Vatican Council gave extensive treatment to the presence of charismatic gifts in the faithful. We can, therefore, say today that charisms are not merely of the past but of the present as well. The continued outpouring of the Spirit goes on in today's world.²

2. Institution and/versus Charism

As we are dealing with *Institution and/versus Charism in the Pauline vision*, let us turn first to *Pauline charism versus institution* and then *Pauline charism and institution*.

a) Pauline charism versus institution

i) *Torah* (Law)

Paul claims himself to be an apostle. According to J. Dupont *apostle (apostolos)* is a post-resurrection title.³ The two constitutive elements in an apostle are the vision of the Risen Christ and a commission to preach the gospel. Paul had a vision of the Risen Lord (Gal 1:12) and a commission to preach it (Gal 1:15-16). Hence he is an apostle of Christ, an apostle of the Gentiles.

This apostle Paul was to preach the *gospel (euangelion)*, which is the good news of Jesus Christ. The gospel is to be proclaimed, to be heard, and to be practised or done by its listeners. The content of the gospel is Jesus Christ. The gospel that Paul transmitted was a gospel of freedom to people

2. Edward J Malatesta, "Charism", *A New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality* (Michael Downey ed; Bangalore: TPI, 1995) 140 - 143.
3. David M. Stanley & Raymond E. Brown, "Aspects of New Testament Thought", *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* (ed. by Raymond E. Brown et al.; Bangalore, 1972) 78:128.

who were bound to the *Torah* (Law). He preached a gospel of justification obtained by people through faith. Here comes a confrontation with an institution, the Law. Judaizers held that justification comes from the works of the Law.

In the period between Moses and Christ the Law reigned supreme. The Law revealed to people God's word and his will. At the same time, law multiplied or enhanced sin and leveled a curse on people (Gal 3:19; 5:20). It acted as an occasion for sin (Lev 11:2-4; Deut 14:4-6; Rom 7:5). It gave people a real and profound knowledge of sin (Rom 3:20). It lays a curse on people. "For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the things written in the book of the law'" (Gal 3:10).

In Gal 3:13-24, Paul pictures the law in the guise of a slave (*paidagogos*: *pedagogue*) who used to accompany the child to and from school and supervised his/her studies. Similarly, in Paul's understanding, the Law schooled people in preparation for Christ, who is the end and goal of the Law. It was merely a temporary arrangement made by God to lead people to maturity. Its role in salvation history was to educate God's people to come of age, to be able to learn of Christ.⁴

The agitators or judaizers in Galatia were insisting that the Gentiles must observe the Law, and get circumcised to become the offsprings of Abraham before accepting the messiah, Jesus. In this they were insisting on the practices of the institution of Judaism. Pauline charism stands out against such an institution. Paul argued that the Law is subordinate to the promises made by God to Abraham. The Law came only afterwards. God's promise to Abraham had a singular offspring in view: the Christ. Those who have been incorporated into Christ through baptism have become also Abraham's descendants, even if they have not been circumcised. The Galatians are not under the Law so long as they are in Christ. The gospel that they have received is a law-free gospel. The Galatians fulfil the Law if they serve one another in love (Gal 5:13-15). The whole Law is fulfilled in a single commandment of Christ: love your neighbour as yourself. If the Galatians bear one another's burdens they fulfil the Law of Christ (Gal 6:2). Those who live by the commandment of love, spending themselves for others, fulfil the Mosaic Law as Christ did.⁵

4. Mathew Thekkekara, *The Letters of St. Paul*, The Face of Early Christianity (Bangalore: Kristu Jyoti Publications, 1997) 167 - 174.
5. Frank J. Matera, *Galatians* (Sacra Pagina 9; Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1992) 15 - 19.

ii) *Oneness in Christ*

“In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all” (Col 3:11). In the Greek it is a relative clause where the clause is built around *ouk.....alla* which corresponds to the structure of a ‘relative negation’. The Semites negated one member of a sentence to lay particular emphasis on the other. Such a disjunctive proposition seems to be evident here.⁶ In this verse the three typical elements of a ‘relative negation’ seem to be verifiable as well. First, the evident facts of racial differences between *Greek* and *Jew*, the religious differences between *circumcised* and *uncircumcised*, the social differences between *slaves* and *free* seem to be negated. Secondly, the affirmation after *but* seems, at the same time, to add strength to the negation preceding it and to provoke a contrary statement: There is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision,*but rather* Christ is all and in all. Thirdly, the negation and affirmation in 3:11 seem to point to some sort of a synthesis in the mind of the reader regarding Christ. Hence the translation could be: “...where what matters is not being Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian and Scythian, slave and free, but rather Christ is all, and in all.”⁷ In this we can see that Pauline charism⁸ is moving against the usual perceptions commonly held.

Col 3:11 a goes beyond national, religious, cultural, racial and social differences. They do not have any decisive value in God’s sight. In Christ these differences do not prevent loving relationships. The manifestation of national and religious differences between *Greeks* and *Jews*, *circumcision* and *uncircumcision* possess no valid importance before Christ. Cultural and racial differences between *barbarians* and *Scythians*, which show contempt for one another, has no significance in the Christian community. This verse proclaims the overcoming of the social antithesis between *slaves* and *free*, between slaves and owners. These barriers do not exist because of the loving relationship into which they enter according to Col 3:11. There is no inferiority of one class over another.⁹

6. Maximilian Zerwick, *Biblical Greek* (Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblici. 114; Rome, 1977) g 445d.
7. Mathew V. Thekkelara, *Christ is All and in All* (Bangalore: Kristu Jyoti Publications, 1999) 58-60.
8. The authorship of the Letter to the Colossians is an open question.
9. Mathew Thekkelara, “Colossians 3:11a: The Abolition of Barriers”, *Indian Theological Studies* 36 (June 1999) 124.

iii) *Onesimus*

Paul sends Onesimus, who was a slave, back to his master Philemon asking him to treat Onesimus “as a beloved brother” (Philem 16; cf. Sir 33:31). This request finds its strength from the baptism sayings of 1 Cor 12:13; Gal 3:28; Col 3:11 where the removal of status differences from the free and the slave in the Christian community is spoken of. In the Letter to Philemon, the Christian master Philemon must accept the slave Onesimus as his “partner”. Paul identifies himself with Onesimus, and Philemon’s continuing relationship with Paul in Christ ought to be a model for Philemon’s relationship to Onesimus. Brotherhood for Paul is based on unity in Christ. Love towards one another is at least heightened among those in Christ. There are texts that talk of brothers and sisters correcting one another, bearing one another’s burdens and serving one another through love (Gal 5:13; 6:1-2). Paul demands equal treatment of Jewish and Gentile persons in Galatia (Gal 2:11-16) and of the rich and poor at the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor 11:17-22). Brotherhood and sisterhood involve at least some sort of parity in personal relationships, built upon by the demands of love.¹⁰ Onesimus’ social status in the house of Philemon should change to the same righteous status as his master. This implies that the difference between master and slave has to be considered as removed “in Christ” and “in the flesh” (in the social world of the house) (Philem 16).¹¹

Here Paul has in mind, the hierarchical opposition between the master and the slave, the lordship and subordination at the social field of the house. Paul asking the master to accept his slave as his “beloved brother” (Philem 16) implies that Philemon is encouraged to leave aside the pursuit of a social status. This is the special social element of early Christianity.¹² Here Pauline charism is against institution. In this Paul is describing the new relationship of the community that is grounded in union with Christ. Philemon is bound to the commandment of love since the one who returns home is a slave-

10. John M. G. Barclay, “Paul, Philemon and the Dilemma of Christian Slave - Ownership”, *NTS* 37 (1991) 181 - 182.
11. Michael Wolter, *Der Brief an die Kolosser. Der Brief an Philemon* (Gütersloh: Verlagshaus Gerd Mohan, 1993). 234 - 235
12. Wolter, *Philemon*, 235.

brother.¹³ Their brotherly relationship must be “in the Lord” and “in Christ” which endures for ever.¹⁴

The social barriers are broken, particularly the most radical one: slave and free. They are not accepted in the Christian community according to Col 3:11. In Christ there is no inferiority of one class to another.¹⁵ All Christians belong to Christ as his slaves. In washing the feet of the disciples, a duty of slaves, Jesus proclaimed himself as a *doulos*.¹⁶ The freedom of the spirit of Jesus Christ is brought, through the gospel, to the believers who appropriate it in baptism. It is realized in them through a life of love with others.¹⁷ The slaves and free persons lived friendly lives in the community under Christ. They are one in Christ.

iv) *The Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11: 17-34)*

The Lord's Supper in the early church was preceded by a fraternal *agape*. In this common meal they had begun to make distinctions among themselves leading to divisions. “When you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you” (1 Cor 11:18). It had unfortunately degenerated into an exaggerated bout of eating and drinking by the well-to-do to the exclusion of the poor. “When the time comes to eat, each one of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk” (1 Cor 11:21). They were not thus assembling to eat the Lord's Supper but their own, a supper of people. During it, they were not merely profaning a holy rite but fragmenting a holy society. Pauline charism here is against such a practice as it is not right for the followers of Christ and for the Lord's Supper.

13. E. Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, (trans W. R. Poelmann and R. J. Karris; Hermeneia: Philadelphia; Fortress, 1971) 203; P. T. O'Brien, *Philemon, Colossians* (WBC, 44; Waco: Word, 1982) 269, 297, 298; Jean-Francois Collange, *L'Epitre de Saint Paul a philemon* (Geneve: Labor et fides, 1987) 63-64

14. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon and to the Ephesians*, (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984) 218; Wolter, *Philemon*, 234.

15. O'Brien, *Colossians*, 193.

16. Rengstorff, “*Doulos*”, *TDNT II*, 274, 277.

17. Schlier, “*Eleutheros*”, *TDNT II*, 500.

b. Pauline Charism and Institution

i) *Christ*

The denial of the differences in the racial, religious, cultural and social fields produces the statement: "Christ is all and in all" (Col 3:11b). The stress here is on the affirmation of the pre-eminent and unique position of God himself in Christ. He is the "firstborn of all creation" (Col 1:15) and "firstborn from the dead" (Col 1:18) indicate that Christ brings about the formation and re-formation of all who come after him. Christ, the combination of "image" and "firstborn", affirms that he is the one who causes those who believe in him to be made like his image and to follow him as brothers and sisters. All this implies an exaltation of Christ.

Christ the *pleroma* of God (Col 1:19) means that the entirety of God's nature resides in him. *Pleroma* clarifies and describes his unique relationship with God. This word implies that God himself fills the whole universe. Christ is the place in whom God was pleased to take up his residence (Col 2:9). The resurrected Christ is referred to here and he possesses all the glory and power of the divinity.

According to Col 1:20, God was pleased "through Christ to reconcile to himself all things by making peace through the blood of the cross." Christ is thus portrayed as the agent of reconciliation and as its unique mediator. His role in universal reconciliation is indicated in Col 1:19-20 through three expressions: "in him", "through him", and "to him". "In him" proclaims the fact that in the risen Christ the residence of God among the people and the universe is realized. "In him" the invisible God becomes manifest to the people. "In him" pictures Christ as an excellent instrument of cosmic reconciliation. "Through him" implies that reconciliation comes through Christ not only for the people but for all things. "To him" stresses the fact that Christ becomes the *common centre* towards which all persons and things converge. Reconciliation comes through the installation of a right rapport of the creatures with Christ.

According to Col 3:11b "Christ is all and in all". Christ is "all", everything and he is also "in all", in all Christians. Christ is the central figure of Col 3. Christ manifests himself really as everything to everyone. In Col 3:11b Christ is exalted to the pre-eminent and unique position of God himself. He possesses a joint rule with God. He is the head of the church (Col 1:18). In Col 2:8-15 the superiority of Christ is described. The titles and the themes about Christ found in Col 1:15-20 have the function of exalting the primacy of

Christ over all things and persons.¹⁸ The charism of Christ exalts him to the pre-eminent and unique position of God himself.

ii) *Communities*

After his conversion, preaching the gospel, whose content is Jesus Christ, was almost a necessity for Paul (1 Cor 9:16). This obligation made him appeal to the devout Pharisees of the Jewish synagogue, to the philosophers of Athens, the civil servants of the Roman Empire, the traders of Corinth, the artisans of Ephesus, the slaves and the riff-raff of the seaport towns, the half-Greek inhabitants of Asiatic cities and the barbarians of Malta and the Lycaonian highlands.¹⁹

What is preached is to be heard and what is heard leads to obedience. This obedience directs people to responding to the good news with faith.²⁰ Faith leads to a baptism which introduces the baptized into a direct relationship with Christ. One is baptized "in the name of Christ" (cf. 1 Cor 1:13,15), baptized "to Christ" (Rom 6:3; Gal 3:27) and baptized "into one body", the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:13). The body of Christ is the church. Hence Pauline charism leads to an institution. Pauline preaching led to the formation of communities in Thessalonica, Corinth, Philippi, Ephesus and so on.

iii) *Mission*

There were apostles like Peter, James and others to preach the gospel before Paul. Three years after his conversion, Paul went to visit Peter and stayed with him for fifteen days (Gal 1:18). Its purpose was, probably, to get to know the leader of the Jerusalem apostles and to seek qualified information from him. In Gal 2:1-10 Paul was Peter's fellow-apostle. An apostle is one who has experienced the Risen Christ and received a mission to preach the gospel. According to the deliberations of the conference in Jerusalem, Peter was entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised and Paul was entrusted with it to the uncircumcised (Gal 2:7-8). The same God who worked through Peter worked also through Paul. In the Pauline vision, institution and charism work together.

18. Thekkekara, *Christ is All and in All*, 132-133; 177 - 179.

19. See C. H. Dodd, *The Meaning of Paul for Today* (Glasgow: Collins, 1978) 48 - 49.

20. C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*: ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1980) Vol 1, 66.

iv) The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit plays a critical role vis-à-vis the old and new covenants. It is the job of the Spirit to show that “in Christ” the Mosaic covenant has become “old” (2 Cor 3:14-17). The Mosaic covenant’s glory was a temporary and fading one, while the new covenant’s glory is “permanent”, and it is ever increasing (2 Cor 3:11,18) and life-giving Spirit opposed to the death-giving letter. “What once had glory has lost its glory because of the greater glory” (2 Cor 3:10). Paul is able to show his readers that while Moses turned to Yahweh for the removal of his veil, the Lord to whom the Jew must turn under the new covenant is the Spirit (2 Cor 3:16-17). We can affirm the centrality of the Spirit in Paul’s Second Letter to the Corinthians.²¹ The Holy Spirit has a very important place in the letters of St. Paul. In the Pauline vision his charism and the role of the Spirit go hand in hand.

3. Conclusion

In Pauline vision there are times when Charism and Institution function together. Paul affirms “Christ is all and in all” (Col 3:11b), an affirmation of the pre-eminent and unique position of Christ. It is the charism of Christ that exalts him to this institution. Preaching the gospel, whose content is Christ, was a necessity for Paul. His preaching led to others listening to him and those who listened to him felt like obeying the gospel. Obeying the gospel brought about a response in faith to the good news. Faith brought them to baptism which resulted in obtaining a membership of the church. Thus Pauline preaching led to the formation of communities in various places. Hence charism leads to institutions.

The apostles, who experienced the risen Christ, received a mission to preach the gospel. Peter was entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised and Paul with the gospel to the uncircumcised. The same Christ worked through Peter and Paul. The same Holy Spirit led them both to preach the gospel. In the Pauline vision institution and charism work together.

There are times when Pauline charism goes against the institution. The opponents of Paul in Galatia were demanding that the non-Jewish converts should practise the Jewish Law, be circumcised and follow the Jewish observances. In contrast to them, Paul held that the Gentiles were justified through faith and not through the Law. Here Pauline vision is in confrontation with

21. Linda L. Belleville, “Paul’s Polemic and Theology of the Spirit in Second Corinthians”, *CBQ* 58 (1996) 303 - 304.

the Law. Paul taught that the Law had only the role to lead people to Christ who is the end and goal of the Law. After the coming of Christ, the Law has no role to play. Christ has established a new law: Love your neighbour as yourself.

In Col 3:11 the racial differences between Greeks and Jews, the religious differences between the circumcised and the uncircumcised, the cultural differences between the barbarians and Scythians and the social differences between the slaves and the free are denied to affirm a oneness in Christ. These differences have no decisive value in God's sight. In Christ these cannot hinder loving relationships among them. Here too Paul is going against the social practices of his day and is led to affirm charism as opposed to institution.

Paul requests Philemon to take back his slave Onesimus as a "beloved brother". This was, most probably, against the thinking of the time. Philemon is asked to make a judgement of Paul's suggestion on the basis of his relationship with Paul in Christ. Philemon is encouraged to leave aside his pursuit of a social status and to bind himself to the commandment of love. Here again, Pauline charism is against institution.

The Pauline vision of *Institution and Charism* and *Institution versus Charism* are very meaningful and applicable to the Indian situation.

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Exodus: a Paradigm of Charismatic Institution and Institutional Charism

Augustine Mulloor

This is a swift reflection on Exodus, in its various phases and constituent elements, identifying the movement from charism to institution and vice versa. Ultimately there is no conflict between the two but a struggle to find the right and balanced blending of charismatic institution and institutional charism.

Introduction

Exodus is the focal event of salvation history in the First Testament. In the biblical history itself exodus is more than a historical event. Its significance is such as to be a paradigm of the unfolding process of salvation history. At crucial historical phases of salvation exodus is reinterpreted. And every reinterpretation reveals the inexhaustible nature of this event leaving in it many more aspects of the revelation to be deciphered. Here is an attempt to reflect on the charismatic and institutional dimensions of Exodus. Is Exodus the embodiment and dynamic expression of "charism" or is it an "institution" in the process of establishment? As the liberative movement, exodus epitomizes the journey from settled and static ways of slavery to the risky, unsettled paths of freedom and hence implies in itself a charismatic dimension. But if the exodus leads to a settled life and rests in the promised land, is it not targeting on an institution? There is the God's command to celebrate the Jubilee, a way to charismatize the institution, making new exoduses possible.

1. Moses: Representative of both Institution and Charism

The personality of Moses is bi-dimensional not only from the point

of view of his Hebrew origin and Egyptian formation, but also from the point of view of his belonging essentially to a powerful institution of the Egyptian Pharaoh's Court and palace and his heart level slanting to and identifying with the suffering people of his own race. The first is secure, powerful, central, settled and immobile institution whereas the second is fluid, insecure, unsettled, weak, marginal and flexible movement. Although Moses belonged formally to the palace of the king, internally his heart rested on the margin and with the marginalized.

The institutional label of Moses' identity is so strong that his attempt to give expression to the charismatic aspect meets with failure and rejection. His desire to help the two Hebrews fighting with each other is stymied by their refusal to identify him as against the power centre of Pharaonic palace (Ex.2).

The emergence of the charismatic identity of Moses is facilitated by his decision to cut himself from the institution of monarchical power and to resign himself to being in the desert of Midias (Ex.2) The turning point is the appearance of God in the form of burning bush (Ex.3). The challenge and call Moses receives in Midia is to opt against the oppressive, exploitative and unjust institution of the Royal power promoting slavery, and to opt for liberative, Justice-oriented and Justice-promoting movement. When Moses re-enters Egypt, he is no more the representative of the Royal palace and the movement he initiates for the liberation of Israelites is a fight of the charismatic against the institutional. The Israelites, in that process, have to walk through untread and hence unfamiliar and naturally insecure paths breaking the chains of the institution of slavery owned and organised by the king. The confrontation of Moses with Pharaoh is the manifestation of this, Moses representing charisma and Pharaoh representing the institution (Ex.7-13). Thus in the three stages of the life of Moses the triumph of charisma over the institution and the possibility of a charismatic institution are exemplified - if the exodus movement or the people on the way constituting the people of God may be considered a form of institution.

2. Exodus: from Institution to Charism

The first two phases of the Exodus event, namely, "coming out" of Egypt and "journeying through the wilderness" represent the charismatic

dimension. The people enter the path and the procession is set in motion through the mighty deeds or "signs and wonders" (plagues) performed by God. Thereby God wanted to reveal that the liberation of Israel is not the result of any human establishment or institution. It is the power of God or the Spirit of God that is the source of energy. Pharaoh's resistance is, each time, described as "hardening of the heart" that belongs to the linguistic field of "institution". So the conflict and contrast is between the "charismatic" and the "institutional". In the instructions given to the people concerning the celebration of the "passover" the position to be taken by the people shows that the people are participating in a "charismatic movement": "you shall eat it like this: with a girdle round your waist, sandals on your feet, a staff in your hand. You shall eat it hastily" (Ex 12:10-11). The language is symbolic of a journey which is urgent and non-stop.

The crossing of the Sea of reeds (Red Sea) is another moment of exodus that signals the charismatic dimension. Being in front of the Sea with the army of Pharaoh pursuing them, the people are tempted to identify themselves with the institution of Egypt that includes even the slavery which seem in the present situation the cave of security and permanence. The words of the people in that predicament are: "Were there no graves in Egypt that you must lead us out to die in the wilderness? What good have you done us, by bringing us out of Egypt? We spoke of this Egypt, did we not? Leave us alone, we said, we would rather wish for the Egyptians! Better to work for the Egyptians than die in the wilderness"! (Ex. 14:11-12). The words of the people imply that they had experienced the hardness of the choice between Egypt, the "institution" and "wilderness" the "charism". What happens, thereafter, is the triumph of the charism over the institution which is epitomized in the song of Moses (Ex 15). This initiates a new dimension for the movement, namely, "wilderness".

"Kliederness" is the symbol of landlessness which is an inevitable expression of charism. Land stands for possession and possessions in turn point to "settled" situation and the consequent stagnancy and even fossilization and reification. All that belongs to the journey of the people through the desert should be interpreted from this perspective of charism: dwelling in tents that are temporary, moving with the movement of clouds or fire.

3. Exodus: from Charism to Institution

Exodus, however, contains the possibility of a reading from institutional perspective. That shows the fact that there is complimentarity and not contrast between charism and institution in Exodus.

The covenant and law are institutions. So the process of covenant making and its ratification through sacrifice and the giving of the law (Ex 19-24) thereafter are signs of institutionalization of the movement. The people are led to chartered, fixed, established and settled way of life. That the people fail to remain charismatic in this context or that they fail to use the institutions charismatically is explicit in the story of the golden calf (Ex 32:1-6). The detailed instructions concerning the meticulous furnishing and building of the sanctuary (Ex 35-40) are signs of established situation.

The third phase of Exodus, namely, "entry into the promised land" is the climax of the institutionalization process because it is the movement from landlessness to owning or possessing of the land. When people are settled in the land and organize themselves the process is complete. This is narrated in the Books of Joshua and Judges leading to perfect institutionalization in the monarchy and the charismatic movement growing simultaneously through the growth of prophecy.

4. Jubilee: Means to Charismatize the Institution

Lev. 25 gives the regulations regarding the celebration of the Jubilee. God intended Jubilee to help people shake themselves out of settled ways and established life. The pragmatic purpose of Jubilee is to return to Jahweh as the only God, the source of power (charism/movement) and the only owner of the land. Recognition of God as the owner of the land is to return to the landlessness of wilderness and use the land as only a gift through which the life may be single-mindedly oriented to the Giver. The renewal of life is the result. Renewal implies the experience of the movement of the Spirit of God in oneself and actions in favour of Justice and love. Hence Jubilee is supposed to be an invitation to create the right equilibrium between institution and charism.

Conclusion: Exodus Pattern and Church Today

The Church that is the continuation and sacrament of the decisive Exodus begun in Jesus is above all a "movement" of the Spirit. As the

embodiment of the new covenant community, it is essentially interior and pneumatocentric as the teaching of Jesus in terms of fulfillment of the prophecies about the new covenant (Jer 31:31f; Ex 36:22f.) reveal clearly. Therefore Jubilee celebration should push the Church, from time to time, to the beyond of the institutional and settled ways and patterns of behaviour. The "institutional" aspect of the Church, having a basis in the Gospels, is supposed to serve as a medium of the "charismatic" aspect, ultimately leading to the new Heaven and new Earth, the perfectly spirit-centred, spirit-transformed charismatic eschatological community (Rev. 21:22).

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Bulletin

Call of the Rss for Swadeshi Christian Churches: Schism or Communion?

Kuncheria Pathil

The RSS chief K. S. Sudershan has made a call to Indian Christians to sever their connections with all foreign Churches and to establish independent Swadeshi Churches. The RSS thinks that foreign and universal connections of Christians will be detrimental to the interest and security of the nation. The call of the RSS originates from a calculated move to divide majorities and minorities in our country and to divide Indian Christians themselves. Its underlying concept of religion in general and Christianity in particular are distorted and it betrays a serious ignorance of Christian history and theology.

True religion always challenges narrow and false nationalism. Though all World Religions had their origins in particular historical, cultural, socioeconomic, political and national context, they were never limited to national boundaries, but meant for the entire humanity. Every World Religion, with its central message and heritage, belongs to the entire humanity. Moreover, no living religion is a closed system of beliefs and practices. Being in history and in encounter with the life-context and contemporary realities, every religious tradition grows, develops and expresses itself in ever new interpretations and elaborations. This spontaneous and natural branching out of a religion into different schools and traditions or denominations takes place especially when it encounters new situations, peoples and cultures. The genius and inclusive power of a religion consists in holding together these different traditions into an organic whole. In this process, tensions and conflicts are inevitable. The original tradition may fail sometimes to recognize the same faith in the new traditions, and it may lead to exclusion and mutual condemnation and consequently new divisions may happen. But the religious divisions

were, as a rule, never based on national boundaries. Though the Lutheran Church had its origin in Germany, it exists today all over the world. The same is the story of other Christian denominations, such as, Anglicans, Calvinists or Presbyterians, Methodists and Baptists. The Hindu fundamentalists often forget the historical fact that Hinduism and Buddhism were, and are still, great missionary religions with a universal appeal and with a great number of followers from all nationalities.

The Church is a Communion of Churches

The Church is understood by Christians not primarily as an institution, but as a *Mystery*, as an invisible *Mystery of Communion*. It is Communion of people with God in Christ which is understood as the *Body of Christ*. It means that the Church cannot be reduced to mere visible institutions, structures, ritual and dogmas, though all of them are necessary and essential. The vertical communion of people with God in Christ leads naturally to its horizontal dimension. The Church is a Communion or Fellowship of all Christians, who have a common life in the Spirit. However, this Communion or Fellowship cannot be a fully achieved reality, but a dynamic reality both in its vertical and horizontal dimensions. In fact, in Christian theology this Communion is not limited to the visible Church; rather it extends to the whole humanity. The Visible Church is only a sign and symbol of this "Universal Communion of all Peoples", cutting across the boundaries of all churches, religions, races and cultures. Hence the importance of creating ecumenical and interreligious relations. Christianity is not a personal and private way for merely "spiritual salvation" in the "Other World", but a call for communion and fellowship, indeed, at a deeper level.

Although the Christian Churches are visibly divided, they are fundamentally united in this common spiritual Communion. According to Christian theology, this already existing spiritual Communion and the visible and institutional communion cross-fertilize and enhance each other. Hence all the Christian Churches are committed to the Ecumenical Movement in which they do search for the visible communion among them and thus to heal the existing divisions among them.

Mr. Sudershan wanted the Christians of India to follow the model of the Syrian Orthodox and the Mar Thoma Churches in India, which are independent Churches. He could not understand the basic communion among the Churches and the commitment of the Syrian Orthodox and Mar Thoma Churches to the Ecumenical Movement, which searches for the restoration of Christian unity. The Syrian Orthodox and the Mar Thoma Churches have not, in fact, severed their links and communion with the other Churches abroad. Mr. Sudershan needs more lessons in Indian Church history. Mar Thoma Church's its separation from the ancient Jacobite Church of Kerala was not for the sake of autonomy, but for a radical reform within the Church, that in fact linked them with the worldwide Anglican Church. The Syrian Orthodox Church's assertion of its independence from the See of Antioch was not in the name of nationalism, but to safeguard the legitimate autonomy of the ancient See of St. Thomas in India.

Indian Churches to become fully Local

What the Indian Churches require today is not to sever their links or communion with other Churches, but to become authentically local. Mr. Sudershan and friends may regard the local Churches in India as the local branches, as it were of a Multinational Company. But local Churches are not to be viewed as branches or extensions of foreign Churches. They are the actualization and incarnation of the "Mystery of the Church" in a particular people. A local Church is the result of an "incarnational process" in and through the response of a specific group of people to the Good News of Christ. It should not be understood as a mere part or administrative unit of another Church or of the Church Universal. Every local Church is truly and fully the Church where the Church of Christ becomes manifest, realized and active. This is the Christian theology of the local Church.

The Christians and Muslims should indeed whole-heartedly welcome the call of the RSS Chief for the inculcation and indigenization of Christianity and Islam in India. The question whether the Indian Churches are fully and authentically Indian is not quite new. The Indian Christians have been asking themselves this question since many years and efforts have been made by various Churches to make themselves fully Indian in culture. After all, India does not have a single

culture, but a cluster of cultures. The Christian faith has in fact become an integral part of many people, their life and culture in this country, and indeed, people have every right to live according to the religious faith they choose. It is true that during the Colonial period some Churches were simply transported and transplanted in India without the real process of incarnation and inculturation. However, it should be noted that fully inculturated Churches like those of the ancient St. Thomas Christians existed in India for 2000 years. Hence the allegation that Christianity in India is foreign is absolutely baseless.

Diversity of the Local Churches

Christianity is marked from its very inception by a very rich diversity, which has its origin in the particular historical, socio-economic, cultural, political and religious context of the believers. Different local Churches had their own disciplines, liturgical celebrations and prayers, theologies, devotions and ways of spirituality. Varieties of the local Churches were never considered as obstacles to unity; rather such harmonious diversities of the local Churches only enhanced the catholicity and universality of the Church. It must be specially mentioned here that even the Roman Catholic Church is not in fact a monolith. Catholic Church is a communion of 21 Churches, each having its own individuality and identity, its own liturgies, theologies, disciplines and administrative structures, though all of them are in communion with the Pope. Each one of these Churches has its own legitimate autonomy and its own administrative structure. In India we have three such Catholic Churches, the Syro-Malabar Church, the Latin Church and the Syro-Malankara Church. The Catholic Eastern Churches have their own "Synods", which have complete autonomy including the power to appoint Bishops for their Churches. The fact that this legitimate right of appointing Bishops is withheld by the Vatican in the case of the Syro-Malabar Church in India is, indeed, a matter of concern.

The authority of the Pope is today balanced by the authority of the Universal Body of the Bishops and the authority of the Synods of the Individual Churches. In the Catholic theology today the Pope is not regarded as a dictator or autocrat, but one who presides over the Communion of the Churches and one who unites the Churches by his ministry of service and love. Unnecessary interventions by Vatican in

the day-to-day affairs of the local Churches are today more and more questioned.

Autonomy and Communion, but not Schism

Mr. Sudershan and friends are inviting the Catholics of India for a schism and revolt, like what the Communists did in China in creating a dissident Church by which they divided the Catholic Church in China. The Catholic Christians in India would like to remind our RSS friends that communion and fellowship is the heart of Christianity, which they would like to cherish and safeguard at all costs. This communion does not mean primarily the acceptance of a foreign or external authority, but partnership and mutual obedience based on the Word of God and grounded in the love of Jesus Christ.

The Catholic Church respects the legitimate autonomy of the Local Churches. In the process of the formation of the local Church, it is the local community, which responds to the gift of the Gospel in the power of the Spirit from its own particular context. No other Church can dictate or control this process, though they may play the role of a midwife. The responsibility of the local Church cannot be delegated or substituted. As the local Churches in their contexts differ from one another, they alone are competent to shape creatively their own life and mission and the structures adequate for them.

However, autonomy does not mean schism or separation from the other local Churches. Without communion with one another the Christian Churches do not become really Christian. The communion among the Churches is usually maintained and manifested by mutual support and solicitude, mutual recognition, regular channels of communication, common confession of faith and intercommunion in the sacraments, reciprocal visits, collaboration among the heads of Churches and common meetings in synods, and by communion with the Roman Pontiff in the case of the Catholic Churches.

The communion among Christians does not exclude people of other religions and ideologies. Communion exists in different levels. Exclusion contradicts the very notion of communion. The Christian communities are, by their very call, sent to establish communion with people of all religions and ideologies at various levels. "A Communion of

Communities" with healthy and harmonious relationships by building bridges between different communities is the goal of Christian mission. May I appeal to all Christians and to people of all religions, ideologies, castes and creeds in our country not to fall into any trap set by the forces of fundamentalism and communalism, but to rededicate themselves for the construction of our great nation by choosing the path of pluralism, mutual understanding and acceptance, and by promoting the values of love, justice, fellowship, peace and harmony among all the people.

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Book Reviews

ENCOUNTER BETWEEN GOSPEL AND TRIBAL CULTURE, ed. **A. Wati Longchar**, Jorhat, Assam: Tribal Study Centre, Eastern Theological College. pp. 126 Rs. 80.00

The book is an effort to counteract the contemporary tribal tendency to downgrade everything traditional as inferior and anything western as modern. Various papers included in the book show various aspects of the conversion of tribals of Nagaland to Christianity within a century going from 0.003 of the population in 1881 to 90.0% in 1991. According to Richard M. Eaton it "corresponds precisely to Max Weber's notion of religious rationalization - that is, the process of elaborating and clarifying the supreme power of a single, universal deity at the expense of all others" (p.18). Persuasive influence of the missionaries was minimal. The 4000 Naga head hunters who were enlisted in the first World War came back impressed by the patriotism and intelligent dedication of European Christian soldiers. There was a fusion of literacy and dedication. When the government started schools all the available teachers were Christian Nagas. The missionaries provided Christian text books, and Sunday was a school day with religious services. The American Baptist missionaries strictly prohibited drinking, sexual promiscuity and head-hunting. This presented a high moral ideal very attractive to the people in general..

Christian missionaries were very careful to change as little as possible in the religious beliefs of the Nagas. The remote, benevolent and indifferent supreme Being Lungkitsungba was left alone and the Supreme Being was given the generic name of the 'spirit' capitalized as Tsungrem and was shown as involved in the lives of people and the malevolent minor deities were made irrelevant. Christians simply adopted the Alhou,

the supreme dispenser of good and evil of the Sema Nagas as the supreme deity. With the Angamis conversion was a political necessity for the chief to retain his traditional position and for his kins a maneuver to gain a certain freedom from the chief's hegemony. Printing and printed literature were a positive advantage the Christians had in influencing the Nagas, which the Hindus and Muslims did not have. "There is no positive correlation between the degree of proselytization and the rate of conversion among the various Naga groups. Semas were converted to Christianity with little or no direct missionary activity" (p.28). The degree to which Christianity was assimilated to Nagas' ethnic identity was stated by a Naga Christian: "Europeans do not have a monopoly on Christianity. When Europeans became Christians they made it a European indigenous religion. Now I, like many Nagas, am a Christian, but I am not a European." (p.29)

M. Rongsen describes the damage done to tribal culture through contact with Christianity via western culture like the suppression of the institution of Morung, with its dancing, singing, and martial training for young men, and the removal of tribal festivals without adequately replacing these with others. "Christianity, in spite of its immense contributions toward the liberation of tribal people, has also indirectly contributed to the alienation of the tribals from their traditional earth-centred life and cultures" (p.33). Wati Longchar, the editor, also argues that though Christianity brought a sense of oneness among the Nagas, the Christian theology unwittingly emphasized dualism between the spiritual and material, giving little importance to the latter. In the Naga world view there is no clear distinction between the sacred and secular, and religion simply meant living in the spontaneous awareness of and encounter with God present in nature. Jerusha Matsen Neal writes about the challenge posed by the oral culture of the Nagas to Christian doctrine and practice based on the written word. It is more adaptive and challenges orthodox Christian understandings of authority and closed canon, and is more likely to let alternative view points to the existential flow of narrative rather than employ complex systems of subordination. "If oral values are marginalized, it is not only tribal Christians who will be affected, the worldwide Christian community will be poorer" (p.91).

Longchar compares the two present day theological paradigms for making Christianity genuinely Indian. The dialogical paradigm which enters into conversation with other religions regarding problems and categories often leave tribal religion untouched. The other paradigm focused on liberation comes from the different organized movements of people like dalits, tribals, women and other marginalized sections and shows that theology is born out of the Christian commitment to their concrete situation. It is a critical reflection on praxis. A drawback of this paradigm is that though seeking to liberate the oppressed, it does not take seriously the interconnectedness of poverty, oppression and nature. "The experience of injustice and oppression for the tribals, is not just poverty, unemployment, disease etc., but it also means alienation from their mother earth in which their personhood and identity are inseparably rooted" (p.111) Christian theologies in India have taught a high anthropology, of which the poor and the marginalized are victims. But as Frederick S. Downs states in the concluding "Vision of the Tribal Churches in North East India", the understanding and practice of Christianity itself have been significantly influenced by the traditional cultures. The rootedness in the local cultures has "Implications for theologizing, for music, for rituals, for the style of church architecture, for life style, for the approach to social and economic problems, and for church polity." (p.117). If the world view and value system introduced by Christianity was superior to the traditional one, the vision of modernity and expectation of future is closely associated with the history of Christianity in the region. There is no question of going back to the past, one can only go forward. The small volume is a very useful self-examination of the church in north-east India.

THE RELEVANCE OF LATIN AMERICAN CHURCH TO INDIAN ECCLESIOLOGY, by Rev. A. Vincent Thomas, Calcutta: R. N. Bhattacharya, 2000. pp. 163, Rs. 400.

The book tries to bring out the understanding of the Church in the writings of Latin American Liberation theologians, Boff, Guttierrez and Segundo. The whole of Latin America is taken as a uniform case and

several analogies are found between the church there and the Indian church, such as widespread poverty induced by industrialization ever-widening gap between rich and poor and continued dependence on the industrialized nations. Awakening to the crisis of their people the Latin American theologians discovered that the inherited Church does not fit the temporal and geographical setting. So they discovered a new ecclesiology in order to break the monopoly of the ruling class in society and to inaugurate a different religious and social life by restructuring the Church. Leonardo Boff in his *Church, Charism and Power* depicts the oppressive situation within the Church and states that the Church is the people of God who are justified by God irrespective of the positions they hold in the Church. "The structure of the Church is not the institution or the hierarchy but the charism that is the root of all institution and hierarchy." The Christian faith awakens one to the social justice, to the true meaning of the global liberation of Jesus Christ that demands not only the conversion of individuals but also transformation of oppressive structures. The Church itself should avoid all oppressive practices and act as a real prophet. It is not a completely defined and established entity; but should be open to new situations and cultural encounters. To effect any evangelization the Church of the poor must stand up against the idolatrous roots of oppression and expose the falsehood of 'transcendental' and 'supernatural' dimension of the systems of domination.

For Gutierrez the Church is of the 'un-invited', the sectors of the common people, the oppressed and believing people. It is within the dialectics of grace and demand, which constitutes the life of a disciple that the relationship between Church and Kingdom find a place. The Eucharist, the breaking of bread, is at once the point of departure and the point of arrival of the Christian community, expressing profound communion in human sorrow and joyous acknowledgement of the risen Saviour. It expresses a confidence that the communion of life that does not yet exist among us, can become a reality. The work of evangelization, which means bringing God to man and man to God, also entails the task of fashioning a more fraternal society. So proclamation of the Gospel should contribute to liberation from whatever oppresses the poor.

According to J. L. Segundo the Church is essentially limited by the very fact of its incarnation in history. It is gathered together at a particular place for worship of the Lord and the proclamation of the Gospel. At the same time it is global. This particular and at the same time universal Church represents the Christ-mystery. No one is excluded a priori from the community of believers and there are no ethnic barriers that separate people from each other. The Eucharist that does not flow into community is devoid of meaning. It is not a sign for the world, but a sign for the Christian community which seeks to be at the service of the world and thus to be itself a sign.

Applying the theology of the three Latin American theologians to the situation of the Indian context the author remarks that the Church has very close connections with the ruling class and is organized and functions on the basis of caste and denominational division inherited from the colonial regime. It appears as an organization planted on the Indian soil from the outside overburdened by institutions often exclusively serving those in power. Coming from different church groups in the West missionaries brought with them also their denominational rivalries. The author examines this crisis in some detail with particular reference to the Church of South India. He quotes the CSI Church report: "Unity in our Church is often marred by casteism and parochialism which raise their ugly heads at the time of elections to the various committees and councils in the Church at different levels creating quarrelsome factions and divisions in the Church."

This plurality of Christian churches in the midst of a plurality of religions presents a great challenge to the Church in India. There is no doubt that the new ecclesiologies produced by the Liberation theologians is of some help in this situation. But one cannot forget the vast difference between the Latin American Church and the Indian Church. Even in Latin America the situation and the crux of the problem varies from country to country. So India has to find its own ecclesiology rather than copy it from elsewhere. Retaining the western style of thinking and theologizing makes one repeat the same mistakes. What is needed is an inculcation of our theological thinking itself.

THE REIGN OF GOD AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DHARMA,
 by **Rev. Sudil IMS**, Allahabad: Atmonanati Prakashan, 1998, pp.284,
 Rs. 90.00

This is a comparative study of the religious and ethical elements of Christianity and Hinduism, of the concept of the Kingdom of God in the Synoptic Gospels and of Dharma in the Bhagavad Gita.

The first part gives a general comparison of the two traditions. The Christian tradition believes in the existence of God, creator and sustainer of the universe and of human kind, who made a covenant with the human kind for their salvation, and when it failed in Israel, re-established it in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus proclaims the kingdom of God and the fulfillment of all the promises of God in and through him. The Synoptic Gospels are theological accounts of the life and mission of Jesus written in the context of various communities that rose after his death and resurrection. The central theme of these Gospels is the proclamation of the Kingdom. Similarly Gita is a theological effort to integrate various systems and theologies of the Hindu tradition, dealing with *karma, jnana and bhakti yoga* included in the general theme of Dharma.

The second part studies in detail of the Kingdom and Dharma. Reestablishment of God's kingdom through the life and teaching of Jesus satisfies various hopes and aspirations of the people of the Christian tradition, while *dharma* variously interpreted, basically means 'the law of being.' A third part shows that the two concepts are complementary in many aspects, though there are also radical differences between them.

There is no doubt that such a scholarly study of the two traditions from a spectator's impartial viewpoint is immensely useful. Still one has to admit that every comparison is offensive since it cannot do full justice to the compared.. After all it is the application of a purely Western method to two Oriental classics, which can be properly understood only through faith experience and inner consciousness of the believers of the two traditions. The question is how the disciples did experience God's rule and kingdom re-established in the person of Jesus, and how Arjuna saw the world through the consciousness of Krishna. Divine gift of faith is what unites these experiences and reveals their complementarity and divergence. This calls for an inculcation of our theological thinking itself.

THE CHRISTIAN PROGRAMME, A THEOLOGICAL AND PASTORAL STUDY OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT. by Joseph Pathrapankal CMI, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1999.

“The commonest title used for the followers of Jesus in the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles is *disciple* which occurs 262 times in the New Testament. This designation seems to be the most appropriate for expressing the inner reality of being a Christian with all that it means and demands.” (p.20) So following Hans Kung and others Dr. Joseph Pathrapankal holds that being a Christian means to be totally and holistically human , an elevation and transformation of being human effected through the teaching and person of Jesus of Nazareth. The Gospel of Matthew presents the major teachings of Jesus in five discourses of which the Sermon on the Mount is the most important, since it dwells on the qualities of those who want to become the members of the kingdom and thereby the followers of Jesus.

Though the Sermon is not a complete and ready-made set of teaching covering all aspects of Christian life, “it aims at radical Christian praxis, and hence it is a command, an invitation and an imperative rather than an abstract theology” (p.26). The chapter one discusses setting of the discourse gathered together from the different sayings of Jesus half a century after his death and resurrection. It is the Christ event, the person and ministry of Jesus. Its inner harmony is that of an authoritative teaching of Jesus and its contents an elaboration of the meaning and dimensions of ‘*metanoia*’ which Jesus had demanded from his hearers from the very beginning of his teaching. Then the great commission of the twelve Apostles to preach to the twelve tribes of Israel is shown to be the substance of the discourse. Another chapter discusses the Beatitudes which explain the inner dispositions that should characterise the disciples of Jesus. The newness of the Dharrma according to which the disciples are exhorted to be the salt of the earth and light of the world is discussed in chapters four, five and six. The six antinomies that contrast the traditional understanding and the new teaching of Jesus about murder, adultery, divorce, oath, revenge and attitude towards the enemy demand a deepening of one’s moral consciousness. Chapter seven discusses the attitude towards the new morality, especially the golden Rule: “in everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets”. The Kingdom of God which

was presented by Jesus as an eschatological gift of God and the eschatological perspective connected with it is the topic of chapter eight. Chapter nine discusses the "Commitment to the Programme" which is neither perfectionist presenting an impossible ideal nor mere interim ethic but announcing the breaking in of God's kingdom, the focus of which is Jesus. Jesus himself was the incarnate commentary on the Sermon. The powerful personality of Jesus is something set against the conventions and practices of his society.

The book is a scholarly discussion of the Sermon on the Mount with ample reference to the various books of the New and Old Testaments and sacred books of other religions. But the author's own personal contribution in the discussion of the Sermon is regarding its relevance in a pluralistic world. His opinion is that though it may be seen as part of the New Testament and the authentic way of life of the disciples of Jesus, one has to go beyond this "narrow" perspective. "The Sermon on the Mount reveals qualities and characteristics which can be addressed to all men and women of good will to take up the challenge of a responsible life which has vertical and horizontal dimensions." (p.371). So one can separate the Sermon on the Mount from the Gospel and accept it without accepting Jesus, the Son of God, the Way, the Truth and the Life. For "what is essential about all religions is that they should try to get back to the meaning and vitality of the original mystical experience." (p. 15). This was exactly the position of the Hindu Reformers of the 19th and 20th centuries, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Keshub Chunder Sen, Pratap Chunder Mazumdar, Mahatma Gandhi and others. who all thought that they could accept the Sermon on the Mount, write off Jesus as a human moral teacher, social worker, avatar or Guru, and continue to seek God-realization and salvation in their traditional religions. But this position was not acceptable to Christians then. It is not acceptable to them today either. For Jesus is the common heritage of all human beings exactly like Buddha, Mohammed and other religious leaders who addressed the whole humanity. But it remains an objective fact, whether one knows it or not, that only through the one Son of God incarnate as Jesus of Nazareth can human beings become sons and daughters of God. Apart from the person of Jesus, the Son of God, whose resurrection from the dead is the core of the Gospel, the Sermon on the Mount is only a moral treatise

like any other, and an incomplete one.. One cannot prove that it is by itself superior to the Bhagavad Gita, the Dharmapada, the Yoga Vasista, Law of Moses or Manusmrti and a host of others. So to argue that the Sermon on the Mount is norm of life for all, and that Jesus is only for believing Christians and not for others, is denying the rest of humanity the right to know and profit from what God did in Jesus of Nazareth for the sake of all human beings.

John B. Chethimattam

1. *Chlorophytum comosum* (L.) Willd. (Liliaceae)

2. *Chlorophytum comosum* (L.) Willd. (Liliaceae)

Editorial

In August 2000 the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) issued the declaration *Dominus Jesus* on the unicity and salvific universality of Jesus Christ and the Church. The CDF is concerned over the *relativistic theories* which seek to justify religious pluralism and thus *endanger the Church's constant missionary proclamation*. In the Declaration the CDF asserts the *definitive and complete character* of the revelation of Jesus Christ as against the claims of other religions, which are *objectively speaking in a gravely deficient situation*. Further the CDF states that the Church of Christ continues to *exist fully only in the Catholic Church*, i.e., the Church governed by the Successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him.

Quite a lot of reactions came from all over the world to this Roman Declaration. Perhaps no other recent Roman document has invited such an attention of the outside world as *Dominus Jesus*. The text contains some very inspiring passages on our faith in Christ the Saviour and on our mission related to the Kingdom of God. It also contains certain statements which are critical of other religions and Christian denominations, and hence not conducive to the *culture of dialogue* that has been initiated by II Vatican Council.

Asia is the continent of a vibrant plurality of religions. The CDF declaration seems to target the Asian Churches in its campaign against *relativistic theories*. If so a theological response to this Roman document from the Asian perspectives is a timely need and a responsibility. In fact the CDF invites theologians to *explore more deeply* how the other religions fall within the divine plan of salvation. Any such theological pursuit should first clarify the perspectives Catholic theologians should take in relating to other religions. In critically responding to the viewpoints of the CDF theologians explore in this issue of *Jeevadharma* perspectives which would promote an authentic culture of dialogue in the wake of the *magisterium* of II Vatican Council and the *sensus fidelium* of the post-conciliar period.

Most of the respondents are from the Asian local Churches. Others have either worked in Asia, or keep constant contact with the theological developments in Asia. All the respondents are theologians who interact closely with believers of other religions. Hence they write from a lived experience of interreligious dialogue. They are sensitive to the feelings of the sisters and brothers of the other religious communities in their neighbourhood. They resonate with the presence of the Spirit in their Scriptures and symbols. At the same time they are deeply rooted in their own experience of God in Christ. In their reflections the theologians try to perceive *what the Spirit is saying to the Churches* in the religiously pluralistic milieu of today. May these theological responses be a contribution to an ongoing dialogue on these foundational questions of faith and life.

Sameeksha
Kalady

Sebastian Painadath

Revelation and Faith

Josef Neuner

Dominus Jesus (DJ) is a document of deep concern. We must be aware of the critical situation of our Christian faith in today's world of religious pluralism. An ever increasing number of ideologies are offered for free choice today, ancient religious traditions from Asia and modern models of world and society. Christian faith loses the commanding position it held in the past, it is one of the options for free choice. The danger increases as also the Church has changed her rigid attitude of the past: Vatican II firmly stood for the possibility of salvation of all people, also outside the Church, and we are exhorted to recognize what is true and holy also in other religions. The danger of relativism and eclecticism is obvious.

The opening out of the Church towards other religions, however, is not merely a change in policy, or adjustment to modern liberal thinking and social freedom, but the result of a renewed understanding of revelation itself and of faith. The new orientation had been prepared in the decades before the Council; it was adopted in the theological commission in a long, laborious struggle. (We may remember the stages in which the Constitution *Dei Verbum* developed till it was given to us in its final form.)

In Vatican I revelation had been seen, in line with neo-scholastic theology, primarily as communication of divine truths, opening to our minds the divine depths which are inaccessible to human reasoning. Consequently also faith was understood primarily as intellectual assent: Guided by God's grace "we believe that what God has revealed is true because of the authority of God himself" (ND 118).

Vatican II returned to the biblical understanding of revelation as God's self-communication to make us share in his divine life and, correspondingly, faith is the human response: "By faith man freely commits his entire self to God". This surrender includes the intellectual assent to the content of revelation; therefore it adds: "making the full submission of his intellect and will to God who reveals and willingly assenting to the revelation given by

him". (*DV 5*). Thus the accent lies on the personal surrender which includes the intellectual assent.

This self-manifestation of God, the invitation to share in his divine life, comes to us from the very beginning of human history: "wishing to open up the way to heavenly salvation, God manifested himself to our first parents from the very beginning", and, in spite of the fall, "wishes to give eternal life to all those who seek salvation by patience in well-doing" (*DV 3*). Thus the primeval revelation to our "first parents" is not a prehistorical event but is universally present and effective at all times. Also today every human person of whatever culture, to whatever religion he belongs, is invited to salvation if he comes to a full surrender to God, by whatever name he knows him.

Thus we cannot accept the radical "distinction between theological faith and belief in other religions" (*DJ 7*). Surely, in Christian faith the "adherence to God" and the "free assent to the whole truth that God revealed" are "inseparably connected; they are included in Jesus Christ. This cannot be said about the surrender to God in other religions which do not know Christ. Still, they have real faith because they respond to God's revelation as it comes to them, and this surrender is their way to salvation.

Vatican II sees also the revelation in Jesus Christ in this perspective: "He completed and perfected revelation and confirmed it with divine guarantee". We are also told more concretely in what this "completion" consists: not in doctrinal explanations of the divine mysteries but: "He revealed that God is with us to deliver us from the darkness of sin and death and to raise us up to eternal life" (*DV 4*). It is regrettable that this decisive sentence is left out in *DJ*: it contains the irrevocable assurance of God's saving love for the whole world. This assurance is the seal of God's revelation.

This finality, however, does not mean that God has nothing to tell us any more: We still continue to learn how this union with God has been reached in other religions; how it can unfold creatively also within the Christian community. Ratzinger himself comments on *DV 4*: "The Christ mystery, being the fulfilment of revelation, is also the necessary ongoing starting point which throughout history remains both presence and promise", the ongoing unfolding of the redeemed life in God's love.

Thus the renewed personalistic understanding of revelation in Vatican II has opened the positive approach to other religions, the possibility of dialogue: In all of them the universal revelation, God's will to communicate Himself to all people, is in some way reflected in a multitude of cultural and

social patterns; all share in the same search for the ultimate mystery of God in many forms of worship and religious discipline. We can speak to all of them - this is dialogue.

The same Council - Constitution *Dei Verbum*, gives us also the guidance to avoid relativism. It points at Jesus' uniqueness not in terms of seclusion, isolating him from and putting him in contrast to other religions, but presenting him as the guarantee, the irrevocable assurance that our human family - not only Christians - is "delivered from the darkness of sin and death". The search for final fulfilment written into every human heart comes from God and will be fulfilled if we surrender our life to him. Jesus' uniqueness consists not in blocking the many ways to God but, on the contrary, in giving us the assurance that God is with us and all who search him earnestly can find his eternal life.

Sanjeevani Ashram
Pune

Is the Roman Church *the* Church of Christ?

Hans Küng

I wonder if our Lord Jesus could have really given out such a declaration! I don't have the intention to enter into a dispute of the scribes with Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger over the formulations of II Vatican Council; he was my former colleague in Tübingen and is now the head of the Roman Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. We are perhaps the last two theologians from the German language area still alive, who participated II Vatican Council. With an overwhelming majority of bishops and theologians he then belonged to those who looked at II Vatican Council as a *Door to the Future*. He too suffered under all that the Roman curia of that time did to block the clear statements of the Council or to complement and correct them in the traditionalistic sense. In this way the whole lot of deplorable and laming compromises entered the Council documents. Still the majority of the bishops and theologians of that time were convinced that these documents were clear enough in pointing to the future and could be interpreted in a forward looking way.

Even Joseph Ratzinger would be able to quote from his earlier writings, which show clearly that he thought in those days in a progressive way. As we were happily working together in Tübingen we started publishing a series in 1967 under the title, *Ökumenische Forschungen*; in the foreword to the very first volume we wrote: "The time is now ripe for a systematic clearing of the theological differences between the Christian Churches. An ecumenical encounter of the different Christian *theologies* has not been keeping abreast with the amazing ecumenical encounter of the different Christian *Churches* in the last years. Still the Christian Churches would continue to keep a distance between one another if the theological blocks, and at times sandbags, which lie between them, are not cleared off or new ways of encounter are not explored which emerge after discarding the theological ballast and make an exchange of their graces possible."

In the meantime of course our ways have parted. In my book *Die Kirche* (p. 337), for which this foreword was written, I have already given clear response to the ecclesiological questions now thrown up in the document *Dominus Jesus*. These responses are not the products of my wishful thinking but based on our Scriptural sources, the Old and the New Testaments, and the mainstream Catholic tradition of two millennia as well.

II Vatican Council has revised in significant points the attitude of the Catholic Church towards the other Christian Churches though certain unclarities still prevail:

1. The Catholic Church had earlier known only the heretics and schismatics as malevolent people; now she addresses the other Christians in general as *separated brethren*.

2. In the past the Catholic Church took note of only the individual Christians outside the Catholic fold; now however she recognises the *communities* of Christians outside the Catholic Church. ("christianae communiones", *Decree on Ecumenism*, nr. 1)

3. She understands these communities not merely as sociological entities, but as *ecclesial communities* or *churches* ("Ecclesiae vel communites ecclesiasticae", *Constitution on the Church*, nr. 15, cfr. *Decree on Ecumenism*, nr. 3)

4. The Catholic Church recognises also the communion of these Churches among themselves in the ecumenical movement, which originated outside the Catholic Church; the foundational formula of the World Council of Churches is explicitly cited: [the relevant passage will be quoted here from the official English translation of II Vatican Documents].

The Roman Catholic Church does not simply identify herself with the Church of Christ in spite of the ambiguous formulations. At least on this one point an explicit rethinking has taken place: the Commission has at first proposed an identification-formula: "the only Church that we confess in the Creed as the one, holy, Catholic and apostolic Church... is ("est") the Catholic Church governed by the successor of Peter and the bishops in communion with him." The Council however approved the formula: "...exists in the Catholic Church." ("subsistit in", *constitution on the Church* nr. 8). This decisive departure from the identification-formula has indeed significant consequences. The Commission justified it saying that this expression resonates better with a recognition of the ecclesial elements which are present elsewhere. What is meant here is the Churches or ecclesial communities

mentioned in nr. 15 of the *Constitution on the Church*. The new formula has been purposely kept as vague as possible, not in any way to impede the theological clarification absolutely needed on this difficult question.

I remember well, in St. Peter's Basilica I once asked Mgr. Gerard Philippe, the secretary of the Theological Commission, for an interpretation of the formula "subsistit in". He reaffirmed what is given in the Commentary of the Commission: in French and German one could simply say "exists" instead of "subsists". In any case the total identification of the Church of Jesus Christ with the actually existing Roman-Catholic Church is totally out of question. The exact clarification of the relation of the Roman-Catholic Church to the other Christian Churches lies still open to the future.

It is too much to expect that the Roman curia, which is by nature turned backwards, would be giving in the post-conciliar period a forward looking interpretation on this matter. It is for this reason that during the Council I wrote my book "Die Kirche" in which I owned up my serious responsibility as a theologian. From Joseph Ratzinger one could have expected something with future perspectives in view of recognising the offices in the Church as well as the common celebration of the Eucharist. Instead our Cardinal did just the opposite by changing his allegiance to the Roman power. By thus joining the opposite camp he has converted the great door that II Vatican Council had opened to the future into a door turned to the past. He has thus tried to "explain" with false theological subtleties and modern jargons the Roman imperialism and centralism, which have been mainly responsible for the separation of the Eastern and the Protestant Sister-Churches from the 11th century until today. Hence in this respect my first critical comment stands: The declaration *Dominus Jesus* is a combination of the medieval backwardness and Vatican megalomania.

The Lord Jesus himself would have, as described by Dostoyevsky, remained silent before the Great Inquisitor with great compassion in his heart. Over against the admonition of the Great Inquisitor to come "never again, never again", our Lord comes *again and again*, and he keeps his Church, his Churches, alive through his Spirit.

‘Do Not Judge...’ (Mt 7:1)

Michael Amaladoss

“Do not judge, so that you may not be judged” is the admonition that Jesus gives to his disciples in his sermon on the mount. It is an advice that is often ignored by us - the Church - in our relation to the others around us. The theology of mission and dialogue depends on how the other religions are evaluated as facilitators of salvation. *Dominus Iesus* seems to have very clear ideas about this. It says:

If it is true that the followers of other religions can receive divine grace, it is also certain that *objectively speaking* they are in a gravely deficient situation in comparison with those who, in the church, have the fullness of the means of salvation. (22)

I would like to ask on what criteria is such a judgment based. The position of the Church with regard to the other religions is normally *a priori*, not based certainly on any inside knowledge of them. The “tradition” in this area is so mobile as to be questionable. We can also question the claim to speak *objectively* about other religions.

Jesus proclaimed the kingship of God and called for conversion to God. The ‘turning away’ was to be from Satan and Mammon as the social and personal principles of evil in the world. But, in the early centuries, the Kingdom of God came to be identified with the Church-institution as different from the other religions. The call to conversion became an invitation to turn away from other religions to enter the Church, which, from being a community of the disciples of Jesus, had then become one among other religions. It needed only one more logical step to identify the other religions as works of Satan. The early Fathers of the Church like Clement of Alexandria and Justin did indeed speak about the presence of the ‘seeds of the Word’ outside the Church. But the reference was not to other religions, but to the philosophical traditions of the Greeks. Such a negative judgment of other religions continued for more than nineteen centuries. Even Mateo de Ricci and Roberto de Nobili were favorable to Chinese and Indian cultures, not to their

religions, which they vigorously criticized. The oft-repeated slogan was: “There is no salvation outside the Church”. Though it was coined originally to refer to the heretics, who were thought to have turned against the Church in a culpable manner, it was soon extended to other religions also. The worst of these was, of course, Judaism and therefore anti-semitism was rampant. It required the horrors of the Holocaust, in which millions of Jews perished during the Second World War, to set the Church rethinking its attitude to Judaism and other religions at the Second Vatican Council.

At the Council, some ‘good and holy elements’ and ‘seeds of the Word’ were condescendingly recognized in other religions (Cf. the Documents on Other Religions and on Mission). They, not the religions, had of course to be acknowledged and promoted. The *Decree on Religious Freedom*, demanding the civil freedom to practice the religion of one’s choice, based its argument on the dignity of the humans as the images of God, not on the worth of the religions. The Asians, encouraged by their experiential contact with the believers of other religions, saw in them “significant and positive elements in the economy of God’s design of salvation” (FABC I, 14). But the post-synodal document *Evangelii nuntiandi* (53) could see in them only human efforts (“arms outstretched to heaven”) to which the revelation in Christ came as God’s response.

A turning point comes in October 1986, when John Paul II invited the leaders of all religions to come together at Assisi to pray for world peace. This invitation was interpreted as recognizing the legitimacy of the other religions as facilitating a ‘divine-human encounter’ in prayer. As a matter of fact, John Paul II went on to declare in December, 1986 that all authentic prayer is the work of the Holy Spirit. The presence of the Spirit is broadened to include religions and cultures in his encyclical *The Mission of the Redeemer*:

The Spirit’s presence and activity affect not only individuals but also society and history, peoples, cultures and religions. (28)

This same encyclical contains another important affirmation regarding the interplay between the freedom of the Spirit and the freedom of the human person in every religion. (29) But the religions are compared to Christianity as preparations to fulfilment. All the others are expected to find their fulfilment not merely in Christ, but also in the Church.

A consideration of this rapid history of the Church’s view of other religions raises a number of questions. The document *Dominus Iesus* is

presented as the reiteration of tradition. Yet in a crucial area like the Church's attitude to other religions there has been an *180-degrees turn* around from looking at other religions as works of Satan, through considering them as merely human efforts trying to reach out to God, to seeing the presence and action of the Spirit in them. This radical change of attitude has taken place within a period of about forty years. How reliable then is this tradition? How accurate are the criteria on which such judgments on other religions are based? What right does the Church have to judge the other religions at all?

The first major question for me is: What authority or right do we have to judge the other religions? We have every right to share our experience of God's self manifestation in our lives and in our history. We can be loud and clear in our witnessing. But what right have we to pass judgment on the authenticity or the quality of the experience of God of other people? In this area the only reliable criteria is a consideration of the lives of the believers in other religions. We can know a tree from its fruits. We can know a religion from the quality of holiness that it produces in its followers. The Church documents, however, always speak *a priori* in this matter and presume to judge the value of other religions without taking into account the fruits of holiness they have produced. It is very irritating, not only to the other believers, but even to us. Religions are matters of faith. How can we, living in one faith tradition, claim to judge other faith traditions objectively? How do we reach the higher ground from which we compare religions, not merely phenomenologically, but also theologically? It is significant that the Asian Christians who are living in daily contact with the believers of other religions are much more positive to them than people who live in their Christian 'ghettos' in the West.

Secondly the official documents always assume a uni-linear vision of the history of salvation. This is an extrapolation of other religions from the relation between Judaism and Christianity *as perceived by the Christians*. (Obviously the Jews do not look at their religion merely as a preparation for Christianity.) The other religions are then considered as pre-judaic in the divine economy of salvation. They represent human search. At best they are examples of God's self-revelation in nature as opposed to God's self-revelation in history in Judaism and Christianity. If we really believe in the interplay of the human and divine Spirits in the heart of every believer and in their religions, this salvation-historical framework can be challenged. What right have we to dictate how and how much the Spirit of God should reveal Godself in the other religions? How can we judge the extent of human cooperation to the initiatives of the Spirit? I recall the sage advice of Ignatius

of Loyola to the director of the Spiritual Exercises that God is sovereignly free to enter and leave the spirit of every person and that the director should respect this free activity of the Spirit of God. *A priori* frameworks imposed on history are dangerous and unsuitable tools for interpreting historical phenomena. Such frameworks also ignore the free creativity and newness of the invitations of the Spirit and the free responses of the humans in trying to reduce a rich pluralism of variously related phenomena to a uni-directional scheme within a limited perspective. If we avoid looking at others from our own limited point of view and if we refuse to accept a non-existent superior perspective from which we can look down upon, compare and judge all the other religions, then the only way we can know and evaluate the other religions is by discovering the interplay of divine and human freedom in them by listening to their followers in dialogue and by looking at the fruits of their experience of God in their lives.

Finally, we confer the absoluteness of God, the Word and the Spirit on the relative mediations of the institutional Church, characterized by the relativity of historical and cultural circumstances and by the limitations of human imperfection and sinfulness. We keep repeating that the Church is a servant and a pilgrim. But we never take this confession seriously. We tend to confuse the uniqueness of the Church with the uniqueness of Christ. We look on the Church as mystery, while refusing the mystery of the action of the Spirit in other religions. It is true that we touch the absolute mystery of God in the mediative symbolic actions of the Church. But this is true also of other religions.

In short, it will be helpful in inter-religious dialogue if we can be positive in witnessing to our experience of God without presuming to judge the quality of the experience of God of other believers. We should avoid every kind of comparison between religions, engaging rather in respectful mutual dialogue open to the fruits of the Spirit wherever they are and contemplating humbly the presence and action of God, the Word and the Spirit in the world and in all peoples.

Dominus Iesus and the Hermeneutics of Reception

Paul F. Knitter

According to the so-called "hermeneutics of reception", the meaning of a text or event can sometimes be found just as much in the way it is received as in the contents of its message. In fact, the "message" can be, in a sense, the "reception". Using such a hermeneutics, theologians can look for the real meaning of Cardinal Ratzinger's Declaration *Dominus Iesus* (DI) for the Roman Catholic Church not by analyzing the nuances of the text itself but by evaluating the way it has been so broadly criticized - one might even say, rejected - throughout the Catholic community. Through this document, the Cardinal has stirred up a widespread discussion among Catholics concerning just what they believe about other religions. The "sense of the faithful" (*sensus fidelium*) in regard to other religious believers has been clarified, thanks to the CDF's declaration. This series in *Jeevadhara* is one more effort to carry on that discussion and clarification.

I would like to comment on one particular way in which *DI* was received in the Catholic community of the United States. In the December 22, 2000 issue of the widely read weekly Catholic newspaper *The National Catholic Reporter*, Fr. Richard McBrien, one of North America's most highly respected and boldly progressive theologians, published a column on *DI* titled " 'Finding' Christ in Other Religions." In it, like so many other commentators, he told us that *DI* was not as bad as it sounds.

For me, his arguments were much more persuasive than the usual spin given by Church officials (including the Pope) - namely, that the chagrin felt and expressed by other Christian churches and religions is simply the result of their misunderstanding technical, inner-Church language, meant only for in-house, Christian theological consumption.

More realistically, McBrien first pointed out that despite its offensive language, *DI* does affirm post-Vatican II recognition that salvation is not

limited to Christians and that the Spirit is alive and well in other churches and religions. But he then went on to explain the harshness of Ratzinger's language. And this is where McBrien's explanation of the Cardinal's motivations appears to me to become a misrepresentation of the state of Catholic theology.

McBrien believes that Cardinal Ratzinger over-reacted to a few maverick Catholic theologians. Essentially, he suggests that because of a few "bad apples", Ratzinger mistakenly declared the whole barrel of Catholic theology of religions to be contaminated. And it seems that these bad apples are growing mainly in Asia. His words:

In the latter part of the 20th century, a few innovative Catholic theologians attempted an adaptation of Christian doctrine to the culture and religious practices of many millions of Buddhists and Hindus in Asia. In two or three cases, theologians may have gone too far in collapsing any meaningful distinction between Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ of faith and other so-called "Christ figures". (NCR, Dec. 22, 2000, p. 16)

These two or three unnamed straying theologians become for McBrien the real reason behind the harshness of *DI*: "As a consequence, the Vatican adopted an initially skeptical, then an openly censorious attitude towards the work of most other theologians engaged in this quest." And McBrien goes on to pinpoint just how these maverick theologians have strayed: "There is a tendency (in the Vatican) to lump these theologians together, *as if, in effect, all were denying the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as the one redeemer and mediator of salvation for humankind.*" (Ibid. emphasis mine).

I think McBrien is correct: such questioning of the uniqueness of Jesus has stirred the concern and ire of the CDF. But I have grave reservations about his further claims that such questioning is limited to "two or three cases" and, especially, his suggestion that it deserves censoring since it falls outside the precincts of Catholic theological exploration.

From my experience of the American Church, from my study of Asian theology, and from my occasional visits to Asia, I find that there are many Catholics who are painfully struggling with the traditional teachings that Jesus is the one and only savior of all other people. In view of their encounter with the depth of religious experience in their non-Christian friends, many Catholics, both Asian and American, find it difficult to continue insisting, to these other religious friends and to themselves, that a saving experience of

God must come only through Jesus and find its fulfilment only in him and his church.

That such questioning of the uniqueness of Jesus is not limited to laypeople, or to a few maverick theologians, was indicated in the 1999 Synod of Asian Bishops. In their response to the “lineamenta” from the Vatican, the Japanese Bishops, for example, echoed the sentiments of many when they wrote to the Vatican: “If we stress too much that ‘Jesus Christ is the One and Only Savior,’ we can have no dialogue, common living, or solidarity with other religions.” The Sri Lankan Bishops were just as explicit: “The uniqueness of Jesus and of the Church has been a perennial problem and poses its own distinctive difficulties for authentic dialogue.”¹

So the question of how to understand Jesus’ saving role in a world of many other religions is real and it runs through many levels of the Catholic Church. As for the answers that the “innovative theologians” are offering, McBrien oversimplifies to the point of misrepresenting most of them when he states that they “deny the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as the one redeemer.”

Risking oversimplification myself, I would point out that such theologians are not questioning *that* Jesus is unique; rather, they are asking *how*. And in exploring the “how”, they are not placing in doubt that Jesus is “redeemer and mediator of salvation for humankind”. They continue to affirm, on the basis of their own experience and in light of Christian tradition, that what God has done and revealed through Jesus is a saving message and power for *all* people, of *all* times.

But they *do* ask whether Jesus is the *only* such savior. “Truly but perhaps not only”- that might capsulize what they are proposing. Perhaps there are others through whom God has stepped into (or emerged from) history and revealed saving truth and power which, though very different from what has been revealed in Jesus, is also a salvific message for *all* peoples.

But if there are “many saviors”, how are we to rank them? Is one savior superior, definitive, normative for all the others? As Asian bishops and theologians told Vatican officials during the Synod, this is a Western question. And not only that, it’s a futile, maybe even dangerous question. Let each

1. Responses found at the UCA. News website: <http://www.ucanews.com/-ucasian/AsianSynod-end.htm>. Also see selections in the *National Catholic Reporter*, April 10, 1998.

religious community carry on in following and proclaiming their savior or saving message. But let each of them also admit that there may be “saving truths” in the others. And so let all of them carry on a dialogue and a collaboration towards the fuller salvation of all people. Ranking saviors, if it is to come at all, can come later.

So these innovative, so-called pluralistic theologians in Asia and in America, would agree with McBrien when at the end of his column he states: “The need has become even more pressing to ‘find’ Christ also within other religions and in the human family at large, and somehow to proclaim him there.” But they are just as ready to allow and even join Buddhists in finding Buddha within Christianity.

It is precisely this kind of dialogue, in which Christians are both finding Christ in other religions *and* Buddha (or other revealers or truths) within Christianity, that stands in tension, if not conflict, with both the tone and theology of *DI*. From their experience of dialogue with other believers, many Catholics simply cannot say that the efforts of Hindus and Buddhists to know and live what Catholics call the Divine Life are “gravely deficient”. And if Christians proclaim that Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims can find “fulfilment” in Christ and the Gospel, they also are coming to clearer awareness that Christians stand in need of fulfilment in the Dharma or Holy Qu’ran.

What Christians are coming to realize through *the practice of dialogue* is in tension with the *theology of religions* that we find in *DI* and other official pronouncements of the Vatican. Such tension, though painful, is also life-giving. Cardinal Ratzinger’s *Dominus Iesus* has made us more aware of that tension. For that, we can be grateful.

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Recognise the Creativity of the Local Churches

Georg Evers

Asked as a European theologian, who has been involved professionally for more than twenty years with developments in Asian theology, to respond to the paper *Dominus Jesus* by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), I would like to highlight briefly six points. My remarks will refer to those passages of the Vatican document which make reference to other religions, leaving out the passages about ecumenism and the relation of the Catholic Church to other Christian traditions.

1. The "Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church" is an Important Theological Issue

There is no denial that there is a need to reflect again on the role of Jesus Christ as saviour and mediator of salvation for all humankind at the beginning of the new millennium. A look at the religious map of the world shows that Christianity, inspite of the remarkable success of its manifold missionary activities throughout the world, especially during the last century, has just been able to maintain its place as regards its percentage share among the world's religions. There is no denial that we are living in a religiously pluralistic world, where the great religions and ideologies are living together. For Christian theology this fact of continuing and spreading religious pluralism should be seen as more than just a fact of religious statistics, but as a challenge to reflect theologically again on the traditional claims of the Christian religion, to have as its founder Jesus Christ whose incarnation constitutes the "saving event for all humanity" (DJ 1). The Vatican paper acknowledges this fact when it invites theologians to reflect "on the existence of other religious experiences and on their meaning in God's salvific plan" and to "explore if and in what way the historical figures and positive elements of these religions may fall within the divine plan of salvation" (DJ 14).

2. Important Contributions to a Theology of Religions have been Made Already

Before Vatican II European theologians like Jean Daniélou, Henri de Lubac, H. R. Schlette, Karl Rahner and also Josef Ratzinger and many others, had started to reflect on the potential salvific meaning of other religions and the role of their sacred scriptures and founder personalities. But these reflections were done without a living contact with members of these other religious traditions in the form of theological reflections in the line of traditional Western theology. Nevertheless, the Declaration on the Non-Christian Religions of Vatican II constitutes an important watershed in the field of a theology of religions and marks a new attitude of openness and respect for the work of the Spirit within them. Asian theologians entered only later into this field and made their voices heard. For them it became more and more obvious that the many questions connected with a theology of religions, were a theological challenge to which they as Asian theologians, living and working in the small minority Christian Churches among the members of world religions, were called in a special way to respond. They were led by the conviction that to live up to this their own theological responsibility, they could only partially rely on the work of traditional theology. They were convinced that they were faced with new questions and problems which in the history of the Church and Christian theology had never been posed before, and therefore, not yet answered. Differently from their Western colleagues, the Asian theologians started their theological reflection from their living encounter with the adherents of the other religions and, therefore, looked upon these religious traditions not from the "outside", but understood them as constituting part of their own religious and cultural heritage. Besides the traditional sources of Christian theology - Holy Scripture, tradition and the Church's magisterium - Asian theologians rely on the religious heritage of the other religions as sources for their own theological reflection, because these religious traditions had constituted and still continue to constitute the treasures of insights and receptacles of the work of the Spirit that had provided meaning and guidance for the lives of their ancestors. The work of many individual Asian theologians and that of the many conferences, seminars and study papers within the *Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences* (FABC) have brought a wealth of new theological insights in christology, pneumatology, in the theology of revelation, and in many other theological fields.

3. Can the Traditional Western Theological Method be the Only Criterion?

The Vatican paper *Dominus Jesus* starts with a look at the present situation of religious pluralism and examines the theological responses advanced by Christian theologians. Summing up nearly 30 years of theological reflection, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith arrives at the sobering conclusion and passes a severe judgment that there are "relativistic theories" which endanger the Church's mission, because they try to justify religious pluralism, "not only *de facto*, but *de iure*" (DJ 4). What has surprised and even hurt many theologians, is the sweeping manner in which the theological reflections of so many theologians in Asia, and also in the West, are declared to be incompatible with the tradition and faith of the Catholic Church. The question which poses itself is: Is it possible to admit that there are new questions and problems posed by the phenomenon of religious pluralism, and then turn to the stock of old answers and traditional theological method and declare that the new answers are lacking and not compatible with the Catholic faith? The attitude taken by Rome in this instance points to the dilemma, that in the eyes of Rome there is only one form of theological reflection which should be considered to be of universal validity and therefore capable of evaluating and judging all other forms of doing theology. The problem here is whether developing new forms of contextual theologies, could be considered as legitimate only in so far as it remains within the boundaries of the traditional Western theological method.

4. The Problem of Hermeneutics, Linguistics and the Limitations of every Conceptual Framework

Is it really only a "relativistic mentality" (cf. DJ 5) widespread among theologians, and especially among Asian theologians, which has been dominant in the theological discussion on the person and mission of Jesus Christ, the salvific role of other religions, the value of their sacred scriptures and the position of their founders? There is no denying the fact that in the past there have been several forms of theologizing within the early Christian Churches. We find the use of different languages like Hebrew or Aramaic, Greek, Latin and Syriac for doing theology and the use of different philosophical schools and their terminology to reflect on the mysteries of the Christian faith. Within the tradition of Western scholastic theology the notion of analogy has been developed in order to point out the fact that all our conceptual definitions of religious truths are never exhausting the mystery, expressing it in some way, but leaving open other facets. Western

theology, especially the mystical tradition, has a tradition of negative theology which again points out the existential limitations of all human knowledge when it comes to expressing the divine mystery, or the mystery of the human being for that matter. Modern advances in the sciences of hermeneutics and linguistics have deepened our understanding that the use of different linguistic and conceptual frameworks alter the way of our conceiving and expressing ideas and reality.

The difficulty with the reasoning in *Dominus Jesus* is precisely, that here scriptural passages, texts of various Councils, statements of the Church's magisterium and the Popes are quoted in a unilateral way without differentiating them according to the period in which they were originally used or placing them in the original context and thus relativizing their validity to answer our present-day problems. It is precisely the contributions of Asian theologians, who are doing their theologizing in their own languages, to have pointed out the difficulty of "trans-lating" dogmatic concepts, which originated in the Greek-Latin philosophical and linguistic traditions, into Asian languages with their so vastly different language games, cultural and religious, as well as philosophical traditions. *Dominus Jesus* does not seem to see this problem, when it refutes the idea that there is "a radical opposition between the logical mentality of the West and the symbolic mentality of the East" (DJ 4). There might not be a "radical opposition", but there are certainly important differences in the ways of thinking, perceiving and expressing ideas between the West and the East which should be taken into account when passing judgement about the legitimacy, validity and way of expressions of different forms of doing theology within the Christian tradition.

5. The Other Religions - only Human Treasuries of Wisdom and Religious Aspiration?

In *Dominus Jesus* a distinction is made between *theological faith* (fides theologalis), understood as the acceptance in grace of revealed truth, and *belief* (credulitas), understood as sum of experience and thought found in other religions are seen only as "human treasures of wisdom and religious aspiration which man in his search for truth has conceived" (DJ 7). From this distinction it is said, that it must be held firmly. Compared with the Declaration of Vatican II about Non-Christians (*Nostra Aetate*), where Christians are asked to "acknowledge, preserve, and promote the spiritual and moral goods... as well as the values in their society and culture" (NA 2), we find in *Dominus Jesus* a very restrictive view of the other religious traditions. After so many

years of experience in interreligious dialogue and exchange between Christians and the adherents of other religions not only in Asia, but everywhere in the world, this restrictive and narrow way of looking at the other religions comes as a surprise. The tone used in *Dominus Jesus*, when speaking about the other religious traditions, does not do justice to the lived experiences of sharing in dialogue and getting to know the other in a deep spiritual way which has enriched so many Christians, bishops, priests, lay people and youth in many countries. It is this complete lack of any reference to the lived reality of religious life in the Christian Churches as well as in the other religious traditions that gives the statement of the Vatican Congregation this notion of aloofness and academic dogmatism. Is it today still possible to pass judgment on other religious traditions without having been exposed to the expressions of their religious belief in their sacred scriptures, their rituals, prayers, meditation and ascetic traditions? Are institutions like the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith not bound, when they feel obliged to make statements of grave theological importance relevant for the whole Church, to rely on the advice and cooperation of bishops, theologians and lay people involved in these fields? Would there not have been a vastly different document if the Congregation had invited bishops and theologians from the FABC to cooperate in its drafting and formulation?

6. Where do We Go from Here?

Dominus Jesus has called for many commentaries which in their majority have been critical of the content and especially of the tone in which the argumentation was proposed. There was agreement that the main theme addressed in the Vatican document is important for Christian theology entering into the new millennium. At the same time it was perceived as a proof that a certain period in the way of dealing with important theological issues has come to an end. The more *Dominus Jesus* has tried to answer all the questions which arise from the fact that we live in a religiously pluralistic world and to clarify the theological problems this poses, the clearer it becomes that this is a "mission impossible". When we look at the reality of the theological enterprise within the Catholic Church worldwide and within the other Christian Churches we have to acknowledge the richness of the many new forms of contextual and inculturated theologies which are in the process of developing. It is also true that this variety poses problems of communication. There is need of ensuring ways and forms of staying in contact, of exchange among different groups, of translating and also of respecting of differences and nuances without losing the sense of the

necessity of a fundamental unity within a more or less widespread variety. The discussion on globalisation, which deals more with the economic, political and cultural cooperation on a world-scale, throws new light also on the older global characteristics which Christianity has developed in the course of its extension worldwide. There has always been a fruitful tension between the "local" and the "global" in the tradition of Christian church life and doing theology. The positive lesson from *Dominus Jesus* could well be that there is the need to let local theological traditions develop and deal with particular theological issues in their own contexts which then could be of use for the whole of the Christian family. Concretely speaking, as regards the problems of religious pluralism, theology of religions, interreligious dialogue and related topics the Asian Churches and theologians are called to be the pioneers to do the original theological work from their particular experiences, in order to help the wider theological community to find new orientation and agreement.

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Dominus Jesus. Or Rather, Servus Jesus

Leonardo Swidler

As a scholar it is very often discouraging, and really embarrassing, to read Vatican documents. They are so often full of bald assertions, frequently sustained by citations of previous bald assertions, even of the authors themselves. Cardinal Ratzinger's Declaration *Dominus Jesus* is unfortunately no exception. It is essentially an expansion of an earlier document Cardinal Ratzinger wrote and delivered before the doctrinal committee of the Latin American bishops, which contained serious errors in citing the theologians he was attacking; these errors stemmed in no small measure from the fact that he constantly cited his American opponent from a hostile German language secondary source which revealed more about the views of the German author and Cardinal Ratzinger than about the American theologian.

Another embarrassment for scholars in this Declaration is the slippery use of key terms which are not carefully explained. For example, what does it mean to say that, Jesus has an *absolute* significance or value? The term "absolute" literally means unlimited, with no exceptions. Does it here mean that Jesus has significance and value for every person? If so, who could disagree? But might not one also say the same of Gutenberg for having invented the printing press, or Jonas Salk, the inventor of penicillin, or....? Again, what does it mean to say that Jesus is the *definitive* self-revelation of God? Are there no manifestations of God outside of Jesus? No Christian would make such a counter biblical claim. What then does *definitive* mean in these sentences? Again, God's self-revelation in Jesus is said to be *unique*. What precisely is being claimed here, for is not every person unique? These and other critical terms are used in very imprecise and cloudy ways, which is surely not appropriate in a document which purports to clarify theological and philosophical issues.

Still a third embarrassment is the way Cardinal Ratzinger proceeds to preemptively dismiss positions seriously maintained by theologians or philosophers either by simply listing them with the implication that they are

obviously errors of judgment, or disemboweling them by giving them a pejorative name which the authors would most likely reject. One such listed “erroneous” position is: “the inexpressibility of divine truth, even by Christian revelation”. Surely no one would claim that nothing can be known or expressed about “divine truth”, presumably referring to statements about God. At the same time, no one, including Cardinal Ratzinger, would claim that it is possible to express in a complete way the truth about God. Hence, it must be the latter, not the former, that any theologian would be referring to were s/he to use terminology such as “the inexpressibility of divine truth” and if that is the case, wherein lies the problem or “error”?

Again, Cardinal Ratzinger implies as erroneous: “opposition posited between the logical mentality of the West and the symbolic mentality of the East.” Surely every serious Christian theologian is aware of the dramatically different mentalities of the ancient Hebrew and Greek worlds at the time of Jesus. For Jesus, as a Jew, the “big” question was not, How must I think? but, What must I do? The Jews, from before the time of Jesus to today, have many commandments, *balachah*, but very little in the way of creeds, Jesus said, “Not those who say ‘Lord, Lord’, but those who do the will of God will...” That is, those who “give food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked ... will enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

The Jew Jesus was asked not, “What are the greatest doctrines?” but “What are the greatest commandments? “.. in brief: “What must I do?” In contrast, what were the major concerns and products of the great Ecumenical Councils which rocked the first centuries of religious freedom of the Christian World? They were: What was the nature of God (one God, three Gods, three Persons in one God...)? What was the nature of Jesus (true God who just appeared to be human, true human who was “adopted” by God true God and true human...)? -- in brief: “What must I think?” It was this “Greek”, abstract mentality that then produced a plethora of creeds: Apostles Creed, Nicene Creed, Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, Athanasian Creed... all the way up to creeds of the last few popes.

Today, surely every Christian New Testament scholar and every trained theologian is aware that the Jews spoke in “picture language”, using a multitude of metaphors, symbols, myths, and stories. What Catholic theological or biblical scholar today would understand the two Genesis creation stories and Garden of Eden stories as some kind of historical accounts rather than mythoi? Who would mistake the Jew Jesus’ parables as being about historical “men who went out to sow seed”, or about people who should physically “pluck out their eyes”, or a specifically historical

shepherd who went to look for a lost sheep? Surely every contemporary Catholic Scripture scholar and trained theologian realizes that the ancient Hebrew story teller, and all subsequent Jews, including Jesus and his Jewish followers, would have been shocked and scandalized were they told that when the first line of Genesis spoke of the “spirit of God hovering over the deep” that that was the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity. Such a (Greek) *metaphysical* mentality was clearly foreign to their (Semitic) more *metaphorical* mentality. Then, wherein lies the problem or error?

Cardinal Ratzinger deliberately dismisses the thinking and language of the pluralist theologians by using a concept and term that they do not use. He nuts in their minds and mouths the concept /term “relativism” when it is clear that they are talking about and using the concept/term “relational”. To accuse the pluralist theologians of “relativism” is to insult the intelligence not only of those theologians, but also of every knowledgeable reader of this Declaration. Every clear thinking person, upon the slightest reflection, immediately realizes that an alleged position of “relativism” is literally “nonsense”. If all is relative to me, and again to you, and you, and you ... then I am not even talking to a real you, or a real anyone else, since everything is totally relative to me. We cannot even disagree, for we would have to have something in common which is not “relative” in order to be able to communicate with each other in order to disagree!

No, the concept and term is not an impossible “relativism”, but, as mentioned, “relationality”. After the philosophical advances of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, surely every philosopher and theologian trained in the second half of the twentieth century is aware that all knowledge is something that *I* know, *you* know, *we* know, *they* know. All knowledge exists in the minds of the knowers and comes there through *my*, *your*, *our*, *their* lenses of *my*, *your*, *our*, *their* experiences. As St. Thomas Aquinas noted centuries ago: “Things known are in the knower according to the mode of the knower” (*cognita sunt in cognoscente secundum modum cognoscentis*. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, II - II, q. 1, a. 2). Knowing is in itself a *relational* activity, a unifying relationship between the knower and the known. The knower is essentially involved in the very act of knowing. All knowing is necessarily *related* to the knower. There is much more to be commented on in this Declaration, but I believe that the foundation of the difficulties that critical thinkers have with the Declaration lies here in these epistemological starting points that Cardinal Ratzinger in a kind of *petitio principii* preemptively dismisses. In many respects, most of the rest of the Declaration is a logical working out of these first positions taken by Cardinal Ratzinger. (As St. Thomas Aquinas states somewhere: A small error in

the beginning becomes a huge one in the end.) But, as in every “begging of the question”, those are precisely the points that must be proven, not simply asserted, regardless of the eminence of the authorities that reassert them in the citations.

What is to be done? All sides need to take each other seriously. We all need to enter into a dialogue, a *serious* dialogue, not a show trial, but a *true* dialogue, which means that both sides come to learn from the other!

This is not a new idea. Already in 1979, in preparation for the Vatican interrogation of Father Edward Schillebeeckx many petitions with thousands of signatures in his support were sent to Rome, including one signed by hundreds of American Catholic theologians urging that “the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith eliminate from its procedures ‘hearings’, and the like, substituting for them dialogues that would ... bring together not only the theologian in question ... but also a worldwide selection of the best pertinent theological scholars Such a procedure is by no means new; it is precisely the procedure utilized at the Second Vatican Council.” (Quoted in Leonard Swidler, *Küng in Conflict*, New York: Doubleday, 1981, pp. 514 - 517.)

In 1988 Cardinal Jozef Tomko, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples after publishing a speech in which he attacked dialogue-oriented missiologists and theologians (many the same as those attacked now by Cardinal Ratzinger), was asked to grant permission for his speech to be reproduced in a book in which a range of missiologists, missionaries, and theologians would comment on it. He not only graciously consented, but asked for an opportunity to respond to them, which he did in a dialogic manner, that is, in a manner that dealt with them seriously and respectfully. (Paul Mojzes and Leonard Swidler, eds., *Christian Mission and Interreligious Dialogue*. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990.)

When Cardinal Ratzinger published his predecessor's speech to the Doctrinal Committee of the Latin American bishops, attacking again by name many of the same theologians, he too was invited to enter into a dialogue with them and others, much as Cardinal Tomko did. After much delay and repeated requests, he sent his regrets that he was too busy.

But that will no longer do. We are now in *The Age of Global Dialogue*. As the 1979 document of the American theologians started: “The function of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith should be to *promote dialogue*”! Jesus did not come to “lord” (*dominus*) it over us, but to be our “servant” (*servus*). We Christians are called to imitate him - and those who are “leaders” among the Christian community are to be the *servus servorum Dei*, the servant of the servants of God.

Dominus Jesus and Modern Heresies

Francis X. D'sa

Introduction

Dominus Jesus [DJ] thematically treats of a number of heretical positions which Archbishop Cassidy has attributed to Indian theologians. Unfortunately there are no references to the culprits. On their side Indian theologians themselves might be inclined to believe that this is a fight against wind-mills. But wind-mills or not, *DJ* sums up these untenable views thus:

The conviction of the elusiveness and inexpressibility of divine truth, even by Christian revelation; relativistic attitudes toward truth itself, according to which what is true for some would not be true for others; the radical opposition posited between the logical mentality of the West and the symbolic mentality of the East; the subjectivism which, by regarding reason as the only source of knowledge, becomes incapable of raising its “gaze to the heights, not daring to rise to the truth of being”; the difficulty in understanding and accepting the presence of definitive and eschatological events in history; the metaphysical emptying of the historical incarnation of the Eternal Logos, reduced to a mere appearing of God in history; the eclecticism of those who, in theological research, uncritically absorb ideas from a variety of philosophical and theological contexts without regard for consistency, systematic connection, or compatibility with Christian truth; finally, the tendency to read and to interpret Sacred Scripture outside the Tradition and Magisterium of the Church. (n.4).

What is disturbing about *DJ* is that its presuppositions - pre-sub-positions - are replete with hidden heresies, *the overriding heresy being that of hermeneutical innocence*. One would not be far wrong in asserting that *DJ* hardly shows signs of being affected by hermeneutic concerns. It gives the appearance of labouring under the illusion that it is speaking in the name of

God. Phenomenological hermeneutics is a search for the way humans are before they even reflect how they are. Such a search however superficial and distorted by prejudice and ideology it may be leads to humility because it clarifies the human situation, human understanding, human possibilities, as well as the potential and the limitations of history and language. In that sense it also reveals some very important characteristics of being human. Apparently when you speak for God there is no need of any hermeneutic awareness.

DJ is so fully preoccupied with ‘heretical positions’ and with formulations that are to be “firmly believed” that it loses sight of *satyam, shivam, sundaram* of life in the world and especially of the life of faith. One gets the impression that even the *satyam* that it speaks about (symptomatically around 47 times compared to love which occurs only twice!) is not seldom reduced to truth propositions which *sensim sine sensu* are brought in relation to divine and revealed truth[s]. Even the *shivam* and *sundaram* aspects of the Christian message (forget about God’s work in other faith traditions) are nowhere in evidence. And this in a document that tells us what is *firmiter credendum*.

The european theologians (at least of the German variety) have been agitated because of ecumenical, not interreligious concerns. There has been little awareness of the heretical presuppositions implicit in *DJ*. Because of the exigencies of space we can at the most mention the more important ones and that too unfortunately very superficially.

First Heresy: Divine truth, even that of Christian revelation, can “be grasped and manifested in its globality and completeness by any historical religion.” (n.6)

The heresy - at least implicitly - denies the historical nature of all language, even language of [Christian] revelation. True, there is no dispute about the absolute nature of Divine truth and about the absolute nature of Christian revelation. The issue is about the absolute nature of its grasp by humans. As historical beings the grasp of humans, in spite all the help and support of the Divine Spirit, remains limited - a limitation which not even the Spirit can remove without destroying human nature.

Second Heresy: The truth about God spoken in human language is “unique, full and complete” (n. 6).

Such an assertion does away with the historical nature of human language and is in effect a denial of the historicity of the human. Undeniably,

whatever the Divine Mystery does and speaks is unique, full and complete. Human language however - even that of Christian revelation - is historically conditioned and relative; it cannot carry the weight of the Absolute in all its uniqueness, fulness and completeness.

Third Heresy: DJ talks of faith as if it were a matter of the will.

Interestingly the phrase *firmiter credendum* and its equivalents occur around ten times in the document: nos. 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, & 20. The voluntaristic approach from western Europe is hardly surprising. Just look at the voluntaristic approach of the two quotations (from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church [of the West]*, 150 & 153): "Faith is first of all a personal adherence of man to God. At the same time, and inseparably, it is a *free assent to the whole truth that God has revealed*". What is surprising is that it is made out to be the catholic understanding of faith. For Indians faith is a matter of grace - an attitude that expresses itself in the prayer, "Increase our faith!" (Lk 17:4).

Fourth Heresy: DJ repeatedly quotes Scripture selectively and thus distorts the Christian message in a substantial manner.

Exegetes and hermeneuts tell that the meaning of a text - the semantic axis - can be worked out only when we take the whole text into consideration. I shall not here go into details but am confident that biblical experts will point out the selective use of biblical texts and expose the one-sidedness of the Roman documents in general and of *DJ* in particular.

Fifth Heresy: From the Christian revelation we can know that "belief, [credulitas!] in the other religions, is that sum of experience and thought that constitutes the human treasury of wisdom and religious aspiration, which man in his search for truth has conceived and acted upon in his relationship to God and the Absolute" (n. 7)

Christian revelation is God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ who spoke of the belief of people not of his faith-tradition in a refreshingly different kind of language: "I have not found such great faith even in Israel." (Lk 7:9); "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." (Lk 7:50); "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace." (Lk 8:48); "Receive your sight; your faith has healed you." (Lk 18:42).

Compare in this respect the language of *DJ* with that of another document "The Attitude of the Church towards the Followers of other Religions: Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission", AAS 75 [1984], 3

and quoted in "Dialogue and Proclamation. Reflection and Orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ", 9: "Thirdly, in the context of religious plurality, dialogue means 'all positive and constructive interreligious relations with *individuals and communities of other faiths* which are directed at mutual understanding enrichment'" (Joint Document of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the Congregation for Evangelization of Peoples, Rome, 19 May 1991; or .21 June, 1991. My italics). Sadly *DJ* did not seem to have heeded the wise words of "Dialogue and Proclamation", 14: "A just appraisal of other religious traditions normally presupposes close contact with them. This, implies, besides theoretical knowledge, practical experience of interreligious dialogue with the followers of these traditions."

Summarized in a nutshell the fifth heresy implicitly denies in fact that "God, in an age-long dialogue, has offered and continues to offer salvation to humankind." ("Dialogue and Proclamation", 38).

Sixth Heresy: By implicitly but completely reducing the Christ to Jesus, DJ denies the humanity of Jesus on the one hand and the work of the Christ in the rest of creation on the other.

The sacrosanct theandric formula for Jesus Christ was and remains "true God and true man". The humanity of Jesus means that he was like us in all things, except sin. His divine nature notwithstanding, his human nature was historically conditioned. A number of consequences follow. Creation was not through Jesus but through the Christ. Furthermore Christ's mediation which is at work in the whole of creation cannot be said to be operative exclusively in the historical Jesus. The opposite would be a denial of the fact that Jesus was a real man, and like all humans historically conditioned and subject to the effects of history, except sin.

Seventh Heresy: By employing the language of 'unicity', 'universality' and 'absoluteness' in the realm of faith DJ distorts the understanding of faith on the one hand and faith-language on the other.

Such language is not of faith and so cannot lead to faith. Faith is known from its effects: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal 5:22); effects that lead to faith. Besides, such language can only lead to unhealthy and useless competition as history bears out. The language of faith has to be symbolic and evocative, language which derives from faith and leads to faith. The language of unicity, universality and absoluteness is ideological, not theological.

Eighth Heresy: Because God has spoken DJ entertains the illusion that it is speaking in the name and authority of God.

Nobody except God can speak in the name of God. What God has said only God's word can testify. Humans at the most can assert what God has not spoken - even this is difficult since the Spirit alone is God's hermeneut but humans know not whence she comes and whither she blows. The hermeneutics of language excludes the possibility of human language being capable of speaking for God or in God's name. We have to be wary that we do not fall a prey to hybris, that we can be like God and speak in God's name. That this is not a superfluous warning is shown by the megalomaniac tendencies of *DJ*.

Ninth Heresy: DJ speaks authoritatively of other religions without knowledge and experience of the other religions.

In today's global village context genuine understanding has to promote understanding in the global direction. This does not imply that understanding is global; it only implies that every tradition has to make a concerted effort to speak 'cross-culturally' so that cultures and religions can communicate meaningfully among themselves. This is especially true of the Christian religion whose mission has to do with proclamation and evangelization. To do this one has to proclaim the good news in a way that the people to whom it is proclaimed understand it. To be understood by them presupposes the prior effort that the proclaiming religion makes them understand the others and their religions. Not only does *DJ* not show the slightest sign of familiarity with other religions and their religious experience, but also it has the temerity and arrogance to pass judgement on them as being gravely deficient (n.7) and to reduce their beliefs to human striving for wisdom.

Conclusion

DJ is an unexpected step and in the wrong direction. It is an effort to put back the clock of history in the areas of ecumenism and interreligious dialogue. But history, especially the history of salvation, has its own dynamics; it is affected but not deflected by human intentionality. After all it is the history of salvation, that is, a movement of reconciling and making all things whole.

The above lines are by a friend, not an enemy. They intend not so much to challenge any power as to point out the presuppositions of a Document that only a cross-cultural awareness can lay bare. It is the responsibility of Indian theologians to hear the call of the universal church. But it is also their

responsibility to respond to it in the local key. Moral responsibility is preceded by and built on the ontological state of response-activity. Indian theologians will do well to test not just their responses to universal claims but also their local ability to respond from the local context. DJ tacitly condemns "the tendency to read and to interpret Sacred Scripture outside the Tradition and Magisterium of the Church" (n.4) as if this would be harmful to the church. The universal church cannot contribute what the local church can contribute. As a matter of fact, since such activity promotes the growth of the church there should have been praise and encouragement for the efforts of the local in this direction. This would be the gift of the local church to the universal church. The local church is really the concretization, not a rubber-stamping extension, of the universal church. For this, universal church and local church have to be in dialogue, mutually to listen and to enhance, to correct and to qualify.

DJ is a good example of the absence of such a dialogue. But if it makes us aware of the deficiencies of the present model it will - albeit in a negative fashion - have served its purpose

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Set a Sign of Hope

Jonathan Gorsky

The stormy reception of *Dominus Iesus* has highlighted a series of problematic areas in inter-communal relations which deserve sustained attention. In the ecumenically sensitive and deeply multi-cultural context of the United Kingdom the document has been received as rather more than a simple restatement of Catholic teaching. The authors seem to offer a highly interpretative view of previous material on inter-faith dialogue and an approach to other religions which is sometimes difficult to reconcile with current Papal encyclicals, in both tone and content. However, beyond limited, and somewhat personalised, analyses which focus on the role of the CDF and Cardinal Ratzinger, emerge those which recognise how much the Church is still coming to terms with the impact of the Second Vatican Council. The ferment created by the Council has been, and still is, responsible for strong reactions - most obviously, the fear that tradition might be diluted or compromised. Other traditional communities of faith in dialogue with the challenges of modernity find these all too familiar.

The few remarks which follow do no more than call attention to one aspect of the reception of *Dominus Iesus*, that which would focus on the relatively uncharted world of inter-faith relations through which the Church is seeking to find its way. Such a process is characterised by debate and passionate argumentation in which it is acknowledged that extreme positions may well be stated in a highly confrontational manner, in response to a perceived veering away from Catholic tradition. Seen in this way *Dominus Iesus* is clearly not absolute and final. This judgement is very different from the 'monolithic' analysis which would emphasise the more abrasive statements about other religions and the somewhat exclusive definition of the Church.

In practice, of course, Catholics and non-Catholics are operating on very different assumptions about the status of the document. *Dominus Iesus* claims to be merely reflecting previous documents which remain

definitive. Non-Catholic readers, however, are alarmed by the recontextualising of earlier material which they perceive to be deeply damaging to ecumenical and inter-faith dialogues. Catholic readers have focused on the main body of the text, emphasised its quotation of conciliar and papal sources, set in the context of internal theological conflicts, and advised us to turn to the far more benevolent contents of Pope John Paul II's encyclicals, which have precedence over documents such as *Dominus Iesus*. They read the text in the light of their own concerns and an unspoken wisdom derived from lifelong experience of the Church. Non-Catholics have very different concerns, and quite reasonably focus on passages relevant to their communities. They are unable to place documents in the wider context of other magisterial teaching, or relevant Catholic theology. Catholic scholars are familiar with the style sometimes adopted by Cardinal Ratzinger's Congregation; non-Catholics are not, and find it deeply hurtful. The simple task of reading a text together is fraught with pitfalls; radically different perceptions mean that one community is literally unaware of the pain of the other.

I have read the same text as some Catholic scholars. I regard it, at least in part as innovative; they see it as a restatement of Catholic doctrine. I believe, for instance, that the passage about 'churches in the proper sense' does not conform to previous Catholic teaching; they regard it as a reasonable interpretation of *Lumen Gentium*, albeit to be read in the context of *Ut Unum Sint*. I found the Latin original passage on non-Christian faiths to be even more unpalatable than the English, but they sincerely believe the precise opposite. I found the material on dialogue unworkable but some Catholic colleagues prefer to emphasise that the founding conciliar quotations are still firmly present, regardless of the context. They should be taken in the light of current battles with syncretists, and have no relevance either to the UK or to Catholic-Jewish relations.

It is important for all of us not only to read documentation, but to enquire as to its meaning, status and context for the community of origin. In so far as Church dynamics relate to us, it is important that we understand them properly and replace inadequate tools of analysis. In terms of *Dominus Iesus* it is vital for non-Catholics to understand the context and know that the Catholic community sincerely wishes to maintain and develop its relationships with other churches and other faith communities. It would be enormously helpful, in pursuit of this aim, if Roman Catholic leaders could restate material from previous magisterial teaching in a position paper or any

form of communication they find appropriate, particularly in respect of ecumenical dialogue which has been most profoundly affected by *Dominus Iesus*.

It would be especially useful if positions of substance were addressed clearly, and progress made by ARCIC and other bodies acknowledged and reinstated., to encourage further positive development, and thus reassure partners in dialogue. Since Vatican II, Roman Catholics, more than any other community, have developed a language that validates, affirms and properly appreciates other churches and non-Christians religious communities, without compromising Catholic ecclesiology in any way.

The Council was one of the very few great and inspiring moments of the twentieth century. In an age that will be remembered above all for hatred, terror and unsurpassed violence, it was a rare time of blessing and of hope. The significance of Vatican II extends beyond the boundaries of the Roman Catholic Church. In identifying the Church with the concerns of the wider world and poignantly referring not only to fellow-Christians but also to people of different faith communities as 'brothers and sisters' it asserted the preciousness of all humanity in a manner that no other faith community has equalled or replicated. In an age of renewed nationalism, racism and xenophobia, the loss of the conciliar heritage would be an unbearable tragedy.

Catholic-Jewish relations have benefitted greatly from the Council and the Jewish community is deeply appreciative of all that has been achieved, particularly by the historic and reparatory endeavours of Pope John Paul II. In an age of internecine religious conflict and uncomprehending 'fundamentalism', sustaining a tradition that offers a different path is a vital concern for all of us; it is a great gift and we hope and pray that the Roman Catholic Church will have the strength and fortitude to continue to bear it aloft in the new millennium.

Britain

Spirit in the World

Michael Barnes

Jonathan Gorsky's generous and heartfelt plea to Roman Catholics to keep their inter-faith nerve in the face of the post-Vatican II 'ferment' comes from a community of faith which has more reason than most to fear the power of unguarded rhetoric. Catholics tend to consider statements of the Magisterium, whether papal encyclicals or the 'notifications' and 'clarifications' of Vatican departments as purely internal texts. We know, as Gorsky says, how to integrate them into a culture which is more or less happily authoritarian and prefers the grand sweeping over-view to the more focused and humble observation. Nowadays, however, with the internet and instant media access, no document is ever the private property of one community of faith. What is said in Rome quite clearly affects the faith of Roman Catholics, but in multi-faith Britain it will also be read by Jews, Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists - and pored over by a secular society which, for all that it denigrates organised religious practice, is nevertheless fascinated by 'the spiritual' and all too well aware of the effect, for good and ill, that inter-faith relations have within the wider political arena. To that extent Gorsky's remarks about both the style and content of *Dominus Iesus* are well made and need to be heard.

The reception of the document has, however, raised more than practical issues about language, tone and audience. Implied in Gorsky's thought-provoking critique is a serious *theological* question about the extent of the Church's commitment to an engagement with others which goes beyond the merely defensive or outwardly polemical.

There can be no problem about the importance of a community of faith reminding itself of key elements of its tradition. *Dominus Iesus* reiterates certain fundamentals of Christian faith and identifies two substantial issues, one christological, the other ecclesiological. It criticises a tendency to speak of the salvific action of God outside of, or unrelated to, the Mystery of Christ and, similarly, to separate Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of

God from the Church as that community called to share in the mission of God. Thus any approach to the Paschal Mystery which would involve too radical a distinction between the 'two processions, the action of Logos and of Spirit, is rejected. What is to be avoided is a drift into a certain type of modalism, implying that Logos and Spirit are simply two different and independent ways of viewing God's action in the world - one for Christians, the other for non-Christians.

This is more than an 'internal' matter. For Catholic Christians the Spirit is always the 'Spirit of Christ' because the Spirit leads Christians, and indeed the whole of humanity, to Christ. Putting it the other way round, by living in Christ Christians learn how to discern where the Spirit may be at work in the world. If theologians are to distinguish without separating, as *Dominus Iesus* demands, they have to avoid two temptations: firstly, to link the two processions so strongly that the creative impulse of the Spirit is shackled; secondly, to link them so loosely that there is no way of discerning the 'signs of the Spirit' in the world, in human culture, among other faiths. Here Gorsky is absolutely correct in identifying the issue for Catholic theology as one of learning how to move beyond internal battles towards identifying the appropriately public face of theology. The principle which commends itself is something of a self-denying ordinance, that in speaking with clarity of what they know, Christians also learn a healthy reticence in speaking of what is, strictly speaking, beyond what is known and hidden in the mystery of God.

It is thus that the more immediately sensitive area to which Gorsky alludes, the identity of the Church itself, enters the equation. But, here again, Christians have to appreciate that the role of the Church, the Christian community, is to participate in what is always God's work of salvation. *Dominus Iesus* can here be read as a bit of 'special pleading' on behalf of Roman Catholics. It is not immediately apparent from the language being used that something else is at stake, a grappling with the implications for the Christian community as a whole of being called to mission, of acting as a witness to the Mystery of Christ in a manner which points to its significance for all people.

Somewhere underneath the rhetoric is an awareness of the need to balance two theological ideas. In principle the Church is the whole of creation gathered into a new unity - the vision of salvation; in practice, however, the Church is an historically-bound community on pilgrimage with others. *Dominus Iesus* wants to avoid the sort of language which would set the

Church apart from the Kingdom, thereby making the Church *just* a series of communities - losing any sense of what holds Christians together, the Mystery of Christ. *De facto*, of course, the Church exists in particular churches, local communities. At the same time, as *Dominus Iesus* emphasises, the Church is 'the universal sacrament of salvation, since united always in a mysterious way to the Saviour Jesus Christ, her Head, and subordinated to him, she has, in God's plan, an indispensable relationship with the salvation of every human being' (20).

This, however, still begs the question: how to speak of such a 'relationship' in a way which avoids the 'relativistic tendencies' which *Dominus Iesus* rightly deplores, but does not simply reduce other faiths into some inadequate adjunct of a Roman Catholic totality? What *Dominus Iesus* nowhere seems to acknowledge is the fundamental principle of inter-faith relations which emerges from *Nostra Aetate*. Once sensitised to the primary defining relationship of Christian faith - the irreducible relationship with the Jewish people - the Church finds itself impelled to heed a call to 'acknowledge, preserve and encourage' the moral and spiritual values of all people of other faiths (NA 2). The implication of that principle is "that Christians are called first to discern and learn 'through collaboration and dialogue' what such values may be - where, to put it another way, the Spirit of Christ may be leading the Church. Inter-faith dialogue, in this sense, is not a mere sub-set of a mission defined in terms of the proclamation of one's faith. Rather, it has its own *prior* part to play in the life of a Church which is called not just to speak of what it knows in Christ but also to explore the manifold relationships which the Spirit of Christ has *already* created in our exceedingly complex multi-faith world.

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Can Scripture Bail out *Dominus Jesus*?

Rui de Menezes

1. Introduction

As far as the Church in India is concerned the Vatican could not have chosen a more inopportune time for circulating *Dominus Jesus*. First of all the garb of the Indian Church is Western because the liturgies of all the three rites (Syro-Malabar, Malankara and Latin) represented in our country were imported from either the Near East or Europe. Secondly, for centuries the official language of the Church was Latin and the liturgy in India was conducted either in Syriac or in Latin. Now it was the Second Vatican Council that was responsible for making us aware of these problems. Further it has impelled us to look for adequate and speedy solutions to these problems. And finally the messengers who brought Christianity to India were foreigners. Is it a wonder if the Christians in our country have been made to feel like strangers in their own land.¹ And Christians themselves have not adequately differentiated between the container and the contents of the Christian kerygma. Some of them still think that the Western garb in which Christianity came to India is essential for our faith, and is a constitutive part of the Christian message so much so that the word 'inculturation' has become anathema for many Christians specially in areas where Christianity has been established for centuries.

Notwithstanding all this Christians in India whether conservative or radical, strongly believe and are convinced that dialogue among the various religions is absolutely necessary for the general welfare of and peace among all Indian citizens. The people of good faith in our country whatever their

1. Since the reference point, not to say the headquarters, of the Christians is Rome and that of the Muslims is Mecca, the Hindus consider the followers of both these religions as foreigners.

religious affiliation are agreed that fundamentalism of all sorts is tearing our country apart in the name of God and in the name of age-old venerated Sacred Scriptures. And so it is our incumbent duty to examine the validity of the absolute claims *Dominus Jesus* is making by merely quoting texts from the Scriptures. But the question still remains whether *Dominus Jesus* is really founded on the Gospels and whether the Scriptures are being misused such as would bail out the document.

We shall look at the matter from three different angles. First, what was the cultural matrix from which the Judaeo-Christian Scriptures emerged? Further is it legitimate to pass from their cultural matrix to our own? Second, is it legitimate to pick and choose biblical texts that support our views and leave out the others that go against our position? And thirdly, is it legitimate to interpret Scripture at face value, that is to say, literally, without having recourse to the norms of hermeneutics?

2. Cultural Matrix of Judaeo-Christian Scriptures

The Scriptures of the Old Testament or of the Tanach as the Jews call it, were first collated and circulated after the Exilic period, probably some time after their return to the homeland, that is, after 520 BCE when the Temple had been rebuilt and normal life was in full swing. Their cultural world was divided into two classes, Jews and Gentiles, that is themselves as the Chosen People and the rest of humanity as practically discarded and rejected by God. The term *gôyîm* (literally ‘nations’) had a very negative connotation just as its English equivalent ‘pagans’. Basically their world corresponded to the countries around the Mediterranean basin and included Palestine, Syria, Anatolia, the Greek mainland with its islands specially Crete and Cyprus, and Egypt, both Upper and Lower. Eastwards it extended to the countries within Mesopotamia and further East to Elam and Persia. In the Old Testament times it included the empires of Egypt, Assyria and Babylon as well as the Hittite empire in Anatolia or modern Turkey, which later disintegrated into the Neo-Hittite petty kingdoms. Formerly it was thought that Second Isaiah was referring to China when he mentions “the land of Sinim” (Isa 49:12 JB; NRSV gives the Greek Syene).² Today literary and

2. From the finds at Qumran, that is, the Isaiah Scroll, the controversy regarding *sinim* has been silenced, and it is now punctuated as *sewenim*, which corresponds to the Coptic *sewen* (Cf. T.O. Lambdin, in *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 4, ed. by G.A. Buttrick, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1962, under ‘Syene’). It is interesting to note that J.D. Michaelis already in 1775 had suggested the reading

historical critics tell us that the word 'Sinim' stands for Syene which corresponds to Aswan in Egypt. After the advent of Alexander their world extended up to the frontiers of India but they really had no accurate idea of the religions and cultures of the Indian sub-continent, to say nothing about Black Africa (beyond Ethiopia) and the Americas. In the New Testament times the writers, if not all at least some, had a more or less vague idea of the confines of the Roman empire.

And so the question arises, how valid are the claims made by the post-New Testament Christian Church specially after the Middle Ages and the discovery of the New World and the sea route to India, that she had been commanded by Jesus to preach the Gospel to the whole world as we know it now? Is it legitimate to hold the position that Jesus expected the apostles of the primeval Church to proclaim the Gospel message to the whole world as we know it now including all the countries of Asia, Africa and the Americas? On the contrary it looks as if Jesus hardly expected his close disciples to finish proclaiming it to the twelve tribes of Israel. In his own words: "For truly I tell you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes" (Mt 10:23). And even the writer of the Apocalypse of John hardly had a horizon that is wider than Anatolia itself. Paul of Tarsus who believed that the end of the world was swiftly drawing near (cf. I Cor 7:25-31), had planned to go as far as Spain (Rom 15:28), which for him was the end of the world. Paul had no idea of the world as we know it, beyond the confines of the existing Roman empire. In fact according to Luke, the writer of Acts, the Risen Lord expects his disciples to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judaea, Samaria and up to the ends of the earth, (Act 1:8), which for him was Rome, where the scenario of Acts ends (cf. Act 28).

And so one has to distinguish clearly between what we Christians have been doing and what Jesus might have enjoined his immediate disciples. *Dominus Jesus* does not seem to take this into consideration. The Primeval Church had set itself her own goals under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit

sewenim! (cf. C. Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, SCM, London, 1969, p. 216). For 'Syene' see also Ezekiel where the expression "from Migdol to Syene" signifies the whole land of Egypt from North to South (cf. Ezek 29: 10; 30:6). This corresponds to the Israelite phrase "from Dan to Beersheba" which also signifies the whole land of Israel. For the reference to the interpretation of *sinim* as China cf. *The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. V, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1956, "The Book of Isaiah", p. 575.

who was Christ's gift to her. We who have come after them have to discern under the guidance of the same Holy Spirit what our task and what our goal is, given the fact that our situation is not that of the early Church.

3. On Picking and Choosing Scriptural Texts

First of all it is methodologically unsound to pick and choose texts which support our views and ignore or bypass others which flatly contradict these. At no cost can one sacrifice intellectual honesty. Thus all those who want to defend the theology of mission normally quote Matthew's Gospel: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt 28:18-20), or perhaps John's: "As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (Jn 20:21). It is not to be forgotten that in both texts it is not the historical Jesus who is speaking but rather these words are attributed to the Resurrected Christ! One might also quote Paul of Tarsus who was quite conscious of having been sent by Christ (cf. I Cor 2:17). But curiously in this text Paul says that he was sent not to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, which is in opposition to the text in Matthew! The deficiency of this approach is self-evident.

But can we also look at other texts which do not involve active mission as the Church has understood it down the ages from the times of the Colonial Era? Thus in Acts the Risen Lord tells his disciples that once they had been clothed with the power of the Holy Spirit they would become his witnesses in Judaea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth (Act 1:8). *Dominus Jesus* must surely be embarrassed on hearing the words of the first Pope, Peter, in the episode of the Roman centurion Cornelius: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him!" (Act 10:34). In this context it is to be kept in mind that Cornelius and his group, who are expressly called Gentiles, received the Holy Spirit *before* they were baptized to the great chagrin of the circumcised believers! (cf. Act 10:45-47).

4. Proper Interpretation of Scripture

Advances in the study of Scripture of the last few decades have helped Systematic Theologians to review their understanding of Jesus as having founded the Church and of having instituted the seven Sacraments. Is *Dominus Jesus* aware of this shift? Should not this open our eyes so that we do not fundamentalistically hold on to the so-called 'mission command' of Jesus by appealing to Mt 28? Are we to believe that the historical Jesus issued a command that has strong trinitarian overtones? Most scholars

seem to consider the passage in Mt 28 to be a later interpolation by the early Church.³ What historical value or theological valuation are we to assign to the words that are attributed to the Risen Lord whether in Mt 28:18-20 or in Jn 20:21? Who is really speaking in John's Gospel in which the vocabulary and style of the Prologue is identical with that of the Eucharistic Discourse at Capernaum and the Last Supper Discourses of Jesus? Do the Gospels really report the *ipsissima verba* (the very words) of Jesus?

Have Form and Redaction Criticism not made us aware that the evangelists not only do not report but do not even intend to report the words and describe the deeds of Jesus as a biographer or a historian would? Are we aware of the literary genre⁴ called 'gospel' which is neither fiction on the one hand nor history or biography on the other? And further can the claims made by the writers of these Scriptures in the narrow cultural context of the Mediterranean basin be extended and appropriated to our present understanding of the world? Pius XII gave Catholic exegetes their *Magna Charta* in the form of the encyclical *Divino afflante Spiritu*, for interpreting our Scriptures according to the canons of literature in 1943! Has this document not made any impact on us? Is that document not valid anymore?

5. Conclusion

It is deplorable that *Dominus Jesus* does not take all this into consideration. The document seems to emerge from the exegetical and theological matrix of pre-Vatican times (not to say Mediaeval), and will, not only *not* serve the purpose of the Church's kerygma of universal reconciliation, but will discourage, nay, put a stop to all dialogue with people of good will all over the world but specially in our country. The theological genius, who wrote the Epistle to the Ephesians⁵, according to whom Jesus by his Cross

3. Cf. See the references to a host of scholars beginning with R. Bultmann and M. Dibelius, in Walter Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Matthaeus*, Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, Berlin, 1972, 3rd edition, pp. 573ff.
4. We distinguish between the smaller literary forms like proverb, parable, 'miracle story', *logion* (saying) etc and the larger literary genre like gospel, acts, apocalypse, letter or epistle.
5. Many modern exegetes consider the Letter to the Ephesians as Deutero-Pauline, written by a disciple of Paul. See Willi Marxsen, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, Gütersloh, 1964 (3rd edition), pp. 153-171, and more recently Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, TPI, Bangalore, 2000, pp. 585-637.

pulled down the middle-wall of partition between Jew and Gentile and made of the two one (Ephes 2:14), thus reconciling those who were far with those who were near (Ephes 2:13), must remain our model for inter-religious dialogue. Is not *Dominus Jesus* with its exclusivistic outlook and fundamentalistic exegesis once again erecting a dividing wall between the various religions and serving to push those who are far even farther? Can Scripture thus understood bail out *Dominus Jesus*? The answer can only be negative!

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Faith Promotes Relationship

Leonardo N. Mercado

On August 6, 2000 the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith publicly issued its Declaration *Dominus Iesus: on the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church*. The said Congregation, headed by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, issued the Declaration because “the Church’s constant missionary proclamation is endangered today by relativistic theories which seek to justify religious pluralism, not only *de facto* but also *de iure*” (no. 4). Its haughty tone looks down on non-Christian religions: “It is clear that it would be contrary to the faith to consider the Church as one way of salvation alongside those constituted by other religions, seen as complementary to the Church or substantially equivalent to her, even if these are said to be converging with the Church toward the eschatological kingdom of God” (no. 21).

On the other hand, statements from the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue have a different tone. For example, its president, Francis Cardinal Arinze, in his letter dated March 3, 1999 wrote to presidents of bishops’ conferences (no. 5):

It is our firm conviction that God wants all persons to be saved (cf I Tim 2:4) and that God can give his grace also outside the visible boundaries of the Church (cf LG 16; *Redemptor Hominis* 10). At the same time the Christian is aware that Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, is the one and only Saviour of all humanity, and that only in the Church which Christ founded are to be found the means of salvation in all their fulness. This should in no way induce the Christian to assume a triumphalistic attitude or act out of a superiority complex. On the contrary, it is with humility and with a desire for mutual enrichment that one will meet with other believers, while holding firmly to the truths of the Christian faith. Interreligious dialogue, when conducted in the vision of faith, in no way leads to religious relativism.

While one pontifical body is for proclamation, the other pontifical council headed by Cardinal Arinze is for dialogue. What is the relationship between proclamation and dialogue? Cardinal Arinze in the same document answers the question (no. 6):

Proclamation aims at conversion in the sense of free acceptance of the Good News of Christ and becoming a member of the Church. Dialogue, on the other hand, presupposes conversion in the sense of a return of the heart to God in love and obedience to His will, in other words, openness of the heart to the action of God (cf. *The Attitude of the Church toward the Followers of other Religions* 37). It is God who attracts people to himself, sending His Spirit who is at work in the depths of their hearts.

Hence the Christian who is involved in dialogue must understand other religions and find “many points of contact”. Cardinal Arinze continues: “While appreciating the workings of the Spirit of God among people of other religions, not only in the hearts of individuals but also in some of their religious rites (cf RM 55), the uniqueness of the Christian faith will be respected (no. 7).

Another document, *Dialogue and Proclamation* (DP), which was issued jointly by the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples on May 19, 1991, is also more reconciliatory to non-Christian religions. Inter-religious dialogue cannot be reduced to being a means of evangelization where direct proclamation is not possible. Some Muslims therefore suspect dialogue as having hidden agenda.

In dialogue Christians and others are invited to deepen their religious commitment, to respect with increasing sincerity to God’s personal call and gracious self-gift which, as our faith tells us, always passes through the mediation of Jesus Christ and the work of his Spirit. Given this aim, a deeper conversion of all toward God, *interreligious dialogue possesses its own validity* (DP 40-41).

There must be a healthy tension between proclaiming Christ and inter-religious dialogue. Pope John Paul II has exemplified this seeming contradiction. While he always preaches the primacy of Christ, his actions

are for dialogue. Much to the displeasure of some cardinals in the Vatican, the Pope in 1986 led the inter-religious prayer for peace in Assisi. In his numerous papal journeys, the pope asked forgiveness for the past errors of the Catholic Church against other religions (see Luigi Accattolli, *when a Pope Asks Forgiveness, the Mea Culpa's of John Paul II*. NY: Alba House, 1998). During the Jubilee year he went in March 2000 on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Somebody described his visit as like walking over a religious land mine because he was in contact with the Muslims and with the Jews. A memorable incident was when he met Edith Zierer. Fifty-years earlier she was a fourteen-year old girl in a liberated Nazi work camp trying to walk toward Krakow. She could have died of exhaustion, with swollen feet, and discouragement. But a young seminarian - the future Pope John Paul II - brought her tea, bread and cheese. He carried her on his back for three kilometers and brought her to the train station. During the pope's visit in Israel, she, with tears streaming from her eyes, thanked him for saving her life.

He told the Jews gathered at the Hall of Remembrance: "Men, women and children cry out to us from the depths of the horror that they knew. How can we fail to heed their cry? ... I assure the Jewish people that the Catholic Church, motivated by the Gospel law of truth and love and by no political considerations, is deeply saddened by the hatred, acts of persecution and displays of anti-Semitism directed against the Jews by Christians at any time and in any place." According to the report of *Time*: "Israel Prime Minister Ehud Barak, whose voice cracked as he talked of grandparents murdered at Tremblinka, movingly hailed the Pope's statements, in effect, accepting them as an apology."

Dominus Iesus uses truth in a particular sense. For example: "the Declaration takes up what has been taught in previous Magisterial documents, in order to reiterate certain truths that are part of the Church's faith" (no. 3). "... It is held that certain truths have been superseded" (no. 4). The Church "cannot do other than proclaim the Gospel, that is, the fulness of the truth which God has enabled us to know about himself" (no.5).

The usages mentioned above and in other passages seem to reflect a certain type of philosophy, namely, that truth is prepositional like the articles of faith, that truth is timeless, eternal, unchanging, and therefore static. The history of dogma has shown how the Magisterium wants precise, clear

and technical words to capture the divine. As such it leans on positive or cataphatic theology.

On the other hand, there is another legitimate school of theology, namely, the negative or apophatic theology which the Magisterium also approves. It holds that words can never fully express the divine and therefore better said as negative or *neti-neti* in Sanskrit. That is why the Indian mystic tradition prefers to experience divine revelation in silence rather than to speak about it.

Because the divine can never be expressed completely, the mystics have resorted to poetry. We see this in the poetic language of St. Teresa of Avila or of St. John of the Cross, both doctors of the Church. We find this poetic language in Oriental religions. Eastern thought is concrete and proceeds by intuition from concrete, poetic symbols. Jesus as an Oriental preferred to teach in metaphors like his parables.

But the Declaration mistrusts poetic language (no. 4):

The roots of these problems are to be found in certain presuppositions of both philosophical and theological nature, which hinder the understanding and acceptance of the revealed truth. Some of these can be mentioned: the conviction of the elusiveness and inexpressibility of divine truth, even by Christian revelation; relativistic attitudes toward truth itself, according to which what is true for some would not be true for others; the radical opposition posited between the logical mentality of the West and the symbolic mentality of the East....

Another way of putting the difference in thinking is mystery. We take mystery here to mean a manifestation of a transcendent, saving reality. The Logos, the Divine Word, did not become a book in the Islamic sense but a human being, flesh and blood. Jesus as a mystery cannot be put into words as St. John attests (Jn. 21:25): "If all were written down, the world itself, I suppose, would not hold all the books that would have to be written." The mystery of Jesus has continued to produce different images and insights of Christ through the centuries. That is why Vatican II says: "As the centuries succeed one another, the Church constantly moves forward toward the fulness of divine truth until the words of God reach their complete fulfilment in her" (*Dei Verbum* 8). Modern thinking has accepted the new paradigm. One of its implications is that truth is dynamic as God reveals himself

through the process of history. Or as *Gaudium et Spes* no. 5 puts it: "The human race has passed from a rather static concept of reality to a more dynamic, evolutionary one." And as humans grow in consciousness, how they interpret reality also changes. Thus the Magisterium, which formerly accepted slavery, later has condemned it. It has accepted freedom of religion and accepted the human dignity, two points which have come out in Vatican II. The new paradigm teaches that since the truth can never be exhausted, our knowledge is approximate and can only be expressed limitedly.

Furthermore, *Dominus Iesus* denies that God can work through "some prayers and rituals of the other religions" except that they may

assume a role of preparation for the Gospel, in that they are occasions or pedagogical helps in which the human heart is prompted to be open to the action of God. One cannot attribute to these, however, a divine origin or an ex operato salvific efficacy, which is proper to the Christian sacraments. Furthermore, it cannot be overlooked that other rituals, insofar as they depend on *superstitions* or other errors (cf. 1 Cor 10:20-21), constitute an obstacle to salvation (no. 21).

If Vatican II says that salvation is possible in other religions, can God not also work through them? If so, how? The statement of no. 21 seems to assume that Christian sacraments have the monopoly of channeling divine intervention.

The Declaration also uses the word "superstition". According to Mary R. O'Neil, "superstition is a judgmental term traditionally used by dominant religions to categorize and denigrate earlier, less sophisticated or disapproved religious attitudes or behaviour.... The use of the term superstition is inevitably pejorative rather than descriptive or analytical, for superstition is defined in opposition to a given culture's concept of true religion" (*Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol 14, p. 163). So the word describes more the viewer than what is viewed. Superstition betrays the viewer's categories and world view.

When the Vatican authorities condemned the pioneering attempts of Matteo Ricci, SJ (1552-1610) to inculcate Chinese liturgy, Rome used Western and scholastic categories which did not understand the Chinese mind. Only much later did the Vatican retract its stance but after much lost opportunity of evangelizing the Chinese. Church history is full of sad lessons like the Ricci case or the Chinese Rites Controversy. Dialogue demands that

one understands the mind of the partner and how he looks at reality. But if the Vatican authorities continue to evaluate other religions from the viewpoint of the Western mind-set, then the wrong judgments will be committed again.

When the Declaration was first released, Archbishop Tarcisio Bertone, secretary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith said in a press conference that “it is not teaching new doctrines, but rather reaffirming and summarizing the doctrine of the Catholic faith defined or taught in previous documents of the Church’s Magisterium, indicating its correct interpretation, in face of doctrinal errors or ambiguities diffused in today’s theological and ecclesial ambience.” But the tone of the Declaration has a bias from the perspective of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. It has selectively picked out passages from previous documents to produce something which does not represent a balanced view of the Magisterium. In short, the Declaration is strong in proclamation but weak in dialogue. Furthermore, it sees other religions from the eyes of Western categories.

Episcopal Commission for Dialogue
Philippines

Historical and Cultural Aspects of *Dominus Iesus*

José M. de Mesa

Rather than assess a particular element asserted by the Declaration *Dominus Iesus*, I would like to comment on the over-all theological method it espouses and follows, which is that of Neo-Scholasticism. The document in its preoccupation with the “contents” of Christian faith, “indispensable elements of Christian doctrine”, “revealed truth” and faith as “free assent to the whole truth that God has revealed” betrays its preference for this manner of expressing the Christian faith. The presentation of its points demonstrates what kind of theological method it is using. Neo-Scholastic theology, which developed in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in reaction to rationalistic philosophy, followed a doctrine-centered methodology in three steps: (1) Presentation of the Church’s official teaching (doctrine); (2) Appeal to Scripture and Tradition to prove or support this teaching; (3) Speculative exploration of the teaching. At times a fourth step was added in the methodological procedure: an application of the official teaching to the present-day situation to show its relevance. The starting point and strangely enough, the end-point of such a way of theological reflection is a number of concise statements to be believed by the Catholic.

As with any theological perspective, the way “revelation” and “faith” are understood is crucial for the other areas of theological reflection. For instance, when revelation and faith are understood as revolving around “truths”, as this document *Dominus Iesus* does, then the sayings of Jesus take primacy (remember the red letter bible editions?) and the main task of the Church is to make sure that these truths, which are regarded as eternally valid for all times and places, are safeguarded and are passed on intact. Neo-scholastic theology understands “revelation” as God revealing supernatural truths and “faith” as the assent of the mind to the truths revealed by God. Faithful adherence to these truths seems to be what faith is primarily about. Orthodoxy, then, easily becomes in practice the highest criterion in

being a member of the Church. This is a far cry from the only sign which Jesus left for us to be recognized as his disciples - love for one another.

Apart from the general choice of a nineteenth and early twentieth-century theological perspective, which is already an indication that its theological understanding and exposition is historically “relative”, the document in utilizing this form of theology further shows itself as culturally “relative” by presuppositions coming from the Western European culture. It is not a surprise that “revelation” and “faith” are both interpreted in terms of “truth” when one considers that in the culture of the European West the human being is regarded as a “rational” being, essentially different from the animals precisely because of *ratio* (reason, mind). Within its own cultural logic, the goal of *ratio* is the attainment of true knowledge or truth. Hence, the more true knowledge, natural and / or supernatural the human being attains, the more his or her humanity is perfected.¹ One notes the ending statement of the document as revealing of this cultural orientation: “The Sovereign Pontiff John Paul II, at the Audience of June 16, 2000, granted to the undersigned Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *with sure knowledge* and by his apostolic authority, ratified and confirmed this Declaration, adopted in Plenary Session and ordered its publication.” Is it really a novelty that present-day Western thought, when considering informational technological sophistication, sees the society of the near future to be a “knowledge society” or “information society”? When one, however, contrasts this cultural presupposition of the human being as essentially *ratio* to others which focus on the human being as relationality, the cultural relativity of *Dominus Iesus* is uncovered. If Rene Descartes can legitimately claim as a Western European, *Cogito, ergo sum*, so can an African validly assert, “Because we are, I am”.

It is useful to remember at this juncture that our being conditioned by our culture is generally very successful that we are no longer aware that it is a conditioning. Growing in that culture, we interiorize it and are socialized through it. We become inextricably cultural. In this sense, we are our culture. Because of this conditioning we begin to presuppose that the way we experience and see reality is *the way to experience and see it*. We are not generally conscious that there are other equally valid ways of perceiving

1 From this point of view, one can consider the Neo-scholastic understanding of “revelation” and “faith” to be an attempt at inculcation for its own time.

reality unless strongly confronted by another culture that is not intimidated by ours. As one anthropologist had insightfully remarked, "Culture hides much more than it reveals, and strangely enough what it hides, it hides most effectively from its own participants."²

Way back in 1973 the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued the Declaration *Mysterium Ecclesiae* acknowledging that doctrinal formulations are historically conditioned in four ways³. They are influenced by presuppositions (i.e., "the context of faith and human knowledge"); by concerns (i.e., "the intention of solving certain questions"); by thought categories (i.e., "the changeable conceptions of a given epoch"), and by the available vocabulary (i.e., "the expressive power of the language used at a certain point of time") of the culture in which they are composed. When we analyze Neo-scholasticism according to these categories, we see how much it is historically and culturally relative. But being "relative" is the way of all human understanding. It is "relative" because it is *related to* a specific context and "relative" because it is also *limited by* that very context.

In conclusion, one can ask whether the points raised by the Declaration are really just theological questions to be considered theologically. Is there not, perhaps, an unquestioned cultural presupposition that the theological understanding deriving from the European West must be superior to all other cultural perceptions? If there is none, then, an honest and open discussion of the theological points ought to continue. If, however, there is, then we have gotten a glimpse of a cultural question masquerading as a theological one and we must deal with it accordingly.

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2 Cited in Pierre Casse, *Training for the Cross-Cultural Mind* (2nd Ed.; Washington, D.C.: The Society for Intercultural Education, Training and Research, 1981). p. 252.

3 Declaration *Mysterium Ecclesiae* of the S. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (11 May 1973). The text is found in AAS 65 (1973) 402404. [Cited from J. Neuner, S.J. and J. Dupuis, S.J., eds., *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church* (4th ed., Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 1982), p. 60,

Profession and Proclamation of Faith

Jacob Parappally

In the introduction to the document *Dominus Iesus* the purpose of this declaration is clearly stated. It “seeks to recall to Bishops, theologians and all the catholic faithful, certain indispensable elements of Christian doctrine, which may help theological reflection developing solutions consistent with the contents of faith and responsive to the pressing needs of the contemporary culture” (*DI* no.3). These indispensable elements are the unicity and salvific universality of the mystery of Jesus Christ and the Church. Further it states the expository language corresponds to its purpose of setting forth “again the doctrine of Catholic faith in these areas, pointing out some fundamental questions that remain open to further development, refuting specific positions that are erroneous or ambiguous” (*DI* no.3). The document seems to fulfill its purpose if its avowed intention is to remind and enlighten believers about the fundamentals of catholic faith and to correct the possible deviations in the theological reflections when faith meets ‘beliefs’ and cultures. The whole document appears to be the explication of the credo which it paraphrases at the beginning of the document. Any creed is a confessional expression of the original religious experience. No one can contest it. It is the expression of the belief of a community. In fact, the tone of the declaration seems to confirm this when it repeatedly says, “it must be firmly believed....” What is to be firmly believed? Not only all the faith-affirmations articulated in the credo but also all the possible implications of the same as the authors of this document would see them. Nothing more and nothing less.

No catholic believer can ever contest the articulations of fundamental Christian faith affirmations. He or she believes that Jesus of Nazareth, born of Mary, alone is the Word of the Father (*DI* 10). Jesus Christ is “one and the same” Word, as Irenaeus affirms. There is only one divine economy of salvation, originating from the Father, fulfilled by the incarnation, death and

resurrection of the Son and effected through the Holy Spirit (*DI* 14). Further, the unique salvific mediation fulfilled in Jesus Christ unfolds itself in the Church constituted by him. So there is no separation between Jesus Christ and his Church. It is the self-understanding of the Catholic Church that in her alone subsists the Church of Christ because of the historical continuity of apostolic succession beginning with Apostle Peter who was entrusted with the care of the Church (*DI* 16-17). Therefore, the document *Dominus Iesus*, declares in unambiguous terms the unicity and universality of Jesus Christ and the Church. Those Catholics who always found security and certainty of their understanding of faith in the Magisterial statements of the Church and those who were confused about the present day theological thinking and missionary approaches in the context of religious pluralism and post-modernism find the declaration *Dominus Iesus* extremely reassuring. They see it as a timely intervention to 'save' Jesus Christ from those who seem to equate him with the mediators and saviours of other religions and to 'save' the Catholic Church from those who are eager to promote ecumenism at the cost of the identity of Catholic Church as the true Church of Christ. However, the language of the declaration cannot claim that it promotes the proclamation of the Gospel in the Asian/Indian context.

Dominus Iesus clearly states *what* every catholic faithful must believe as a catholic. Its language is clearly a confessional language and therefore it cannot but be exclusive. In this confessional language the unicity and the salvific universality of Jesus Christ and the Church must exclude any other claim of revelation by God in other religions and any other community of believers in Jesus Christ. It is only a logical consequence of any statement in a confessional language. However, how to proclaim this faith in the context of a plurality of religions and a multiplicity of churches and ecclesial communities? The declaration *DI* reaffirms the obligation of the Church to proclaim the Gospel to the whole world (no. 1) but it does not seem to recognize that the confessional language cannot be the language of proclamation if it is to be meaningful to the hearers of the Word so that they can respond to it. It is not only the charism of the Local Churches but also their duty to evolve a language in which the faith-affirmations can be meaningfully communicated. It would be a disservice to the Gospel if its life-giving message cannot be communicated meaningfully taking into account the world-view and the cultural genius of a particular people.

The enthusiastic efforts of the Church in India/Asia to fulfill her mission of proclaiming Jesus Christ in a language meaningful to the people will be

greatly hampered by the over enthusiasm of the declaration *DI* to identify confessional language with the language of proclamation. The language of *DI* can be perceived as offensive, arrogant and triumphalistic by the people of other faiths (nos.7, 22). It plays into the hands of the fundamentalists of other religions to prove their point of accusation against the Christian efforts to enter into dialogue with other religions as a pernicious strategy to secure political, social, cultural and economic domination. Thus, genuine efforts to enter into inter-religious dialogue suffer, creative ways of proclaiming the Good News get thwarted and the mission of the Church in general gets defeated. Living and proclaiming faith in Jesus Christ every day in the midst of the people of other faiths and other cultures is one thing and producing theological treatises and articulations of Christian faith by those who have experienced only a mono-culture and mono-religion is another thing. Dialogue of life and action is the life and breath of the proclamation of Christian faith in Asia/India. The second Vatican Council not only recognizes this but promotes it whole-heartedly. It is doubtful whether *DI* reflects the spirit of dialogue ushered in by Vatican II.

The creed expresses the content of Christian faith. *DI* while re-stating the mission of the Church to proclaim this faith seems to negate the obvious difference between the content of faith and the method of proclaiming it. Otherwise, the declaration would not have pointed out certain approaches as erroneous or ambiguous (no.4). *DI* points out correctly that it is erroneous to separate the salvific action of the Logos as such and the incarnate Word, Holy Spirit and the incarnate Word, the Church and the Kingdom of God etc. (nos. 11,12) and it states unambiguously that God's revelation in Jesus Christ is full and complete (no.6). Should the Church go on proclaiming these truths in exclusive categories even if they do not make any sense to the listeners. For those whose world-view operates on the epistemological principle of identity rather than on the principle of contradiction, for whom trans-historical truths are more real than historical facts, liberation from ignorance is more important than liberation from sin, symbolic religious expressions are more evocative and experiential than creeds and dogmatic statements, any exclusive statements fail to fit into the scheme of things. Following some of the Fathers of the Church should we begin our proclamation with Word as such and end with Word incarnate without separation in the process of dialogue or follow a monologue using exclusive language defeating the very purpose of proclamation?

It is clear that the declaration *DI* tries to articulate the uniqueness and universality of Jesus Christ and his Church. If the world-view of the reader of this document is western and if the epistemological principle that is used is the principle of contradiction in presenting the identity of Christ and his Church *DI* has succeeded in its attempt. But the people of Asia/India who do not share this world-view would find these articulations about Jesus Christ and his Church as making Jesus Christ small and his Church, a sect. No wonder then, Keshub Chandra Sen lamented over the efforts of the western minds to make the larger Christ into a small Christ. The Word that enlightens everyone coming into the world, who became flesh and dwelt among us can be seen and experienced only in relation to all that exists. The possibility of enriching our present understanding of the mystery of Christ presupposes that we have to give up the idea that we have exhausted the possibility of understanding the mystery of Jesus Christ and that the present articulations about him are clear for the people of all cultures and world-views. It is clear to those who encounter Jesus Christ in the living tradition of the Church and understand the challenges of their inherited Asian/Indian world-view that our faith-affirmations about the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, his unique mediation etc., cannot be understood by those to whom it is proclaimed. The attempts of the Indian theologians to present the same truths of Christian revelation in various ways meaningful to the Indian context may be construed as relativising the fundamental truths of Christian revelation if such pedagogical methods are not properly understood.

Jesus Christ's trans-historical and living presence through his Spirit in all that is good and beautiful and perfect must be the point of departure and his historical presence must be the point of arrival in the proclamation of the Gospel. This is imperative as the overemphasis on the historicity of Jesus at the beginning of the proclamation would reduce him to be one among the historical founders of religion and make him appear small.

Jesus Christ cannot be meaningfully proclaimed in the Indian context in isolation or separated from the 'many and varied ways God has spoken to our fathers' (Heb 1: If). Other founders of religion and other ways of salvation need not be understood as parallel or complimentary to God's revelation through Jesus Christ which was 'once and for all'. But there is no need to categorize other religious mediations and mediators as deficient ways to salvation in order to show the centrality of Jesus Christ in the economy of salvation. It would provide only insurmountable difficulties in

the proclamation of the Gospel. The newness of God's revelation in Jesus Christ is powerful enough to transform persons and societies.

God's Spirit present in the authentic values of other religions cannot be separated from Jesus Christ. Indian and Asian attempts to recognize the 'hidden presence' of Christ through his Spirit in the authentic religious and cultural traditions in no way separate Jesus Christ from his Spirit but enhance the tremendous possibility of proclaiming the centrality of Jesus Christ. Discovering the Spirit's presence and action in the complex realities of India and Asia leads to the encounter with Jesus Christ whose Spirit he is. Pope John Paul II underlined the inseparability of the action of the Holy Spirit and the universal salvation in Christ and the Church's commitment to follow the prompting to fulfill her mission (*EA* nos. 17-18). The proclamation of God's kingdom through dialogue with all those who are committed to create a just society in no way hinders the commitment to Christ and the emergence of the Church but enhances them. In the self-emptying commitment of Christians for the transformation of the unjust society and in their courage to stand up for the values of the kingdom and in their readiness to suffer the consequences, people of other religious traditions discover the liberating and kenotic image of Jesus Christ.

The declaration *DI* attempts to protect the Catholic faith in the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and his Church from any erroneous deviations. *DI* gives certain security to a minority of the believers who are confused when the Spirit of God blows wherever he wills. However, *DI* does not proclaim the Lord Jesus of self-emptying love and compassion who was open to all that is authentically human. This declaration may not bring anyone to the Church but can at best dampen the spirit of those who have engaged in dialogue, ecumenism and creative ways of proclaiming Jesus Christ and his Kingdom.

FABC Responds to *Dominus Iesus*

Edmund Chia

When asked to write the present article, the first thing I did was to do a Yahoo search, and, to my delight, found 303 websites which carried the entry *Dominus Iesus*. I looked at more than half of these and noticed that the majority of the articles were critical, and at times even condemnatory, of the Vatican's document, made public by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on 5 September, 2000. Even as six months have passed, more articles continue to be churned out and many regard the *Dominus Iesus* document as a *pastoral disaster*. A look at some of the article-headings on the Yahoo sites is revealing. For instance, one article - begins with *The much maligned Vatican document...* and another had this for its title: *Dominus Iesus Exalts Her Throne*. Yet another hit the nail right on the head by entitling it explicitly as: *Catholics are the Best: I know you mean it, but did you have to say it that way?* Others carried titles such as *Negative Reactions to Dominus Iesus*, *Vatican Declaration Provokes Churches*, *The Vatican Magnifies Divide Among World's Religions*, *Rome, Relativism and Reaction*, and *A Kiss of Death for the Ecumenists*.

Of course, there were also articles, though few and far between, which came to the Vatican's defence. Among them was a report which stated that Carey (Archbishop of Canterbury, recently elevated to Cardinal status) dismisses attack on *deficient* faith and another which emphasised the theme of *Preaching the Gospel to Non-Christians*. One article unambiguous in its support for *Dominus Iesus* was entitled: *An Overdue Reminder that Not All is Relative*. Moreover, one can also find *Answers to Main Objections against Dominus Iesus*, a report of an interview given by Cardinal Ratzinger, prefect of the CDF, the main person behind the document.

One cannot help but notice two very distinct traits in the responses to *Dominus Iesus*. Firstly, the majority of the negative reactions came from Christians who belong to the other Christian churches, or ecclesial communities as *Dominus Iesus* would insist they be called. For instance, the

General Secretary of the world Alliance for Reformed Churches has his response entitled: *Disappointment and Dismay*. Others were mainly articles which criticised *Dominus Iesus* for suggesting that their own churches are not *Churches in the proper sense* and that there only exists a single Church of Christ, which subsists in the Catholic Church (*DI*, n.17). The avalanche of negative reactions pertaining to this particular issue surprised many, not the least Ratzinger himself, as, in the words of the Cardinal, the ecumenical issues occupy only a small part of the document. These Christians have simply disregarded the Declaration's true theme, the Cardinal laments. *Dominus Iesus* is about the Lordship of Christ, whereby the Pope wanted to offer to the world a great and solemn recognition of Jesus Christ as Lord¹. In other words, *Dominus Iesus* was not really targeted towards the other Christians as it is to peoples of other world religions. This is a Christian document, meant to assert the supremacy of the Christian *theological faith*, viz-à-viz the *belief* of the other religions (*DI*, n.7).

A second observation is that most of the responses, at least those posted on the Internet, were from peoples of the West. If they were Catholics they were mostly Catholics from Europe or America. Considering that the primary intent of the document was to counter the *religious relativists*, in particular those postulating relativistic theories which seek to justify religious pluralism (*DI*, n. 4), the Westerners, then, were not really the prime targets. To be sure, the document then goes on to point out that the relativistic mentality is rooted in certain philosophical and theological presuppositions and specifically suggests that the logical mentality of the West is in radical opposition to the symbolic mentality of the East. *Dominus Iesus*, therefore, does not conceal those whom it targets with regard to this particular issue. They are the fledgling theologians of the East, the seminal thinkers of Asia in general and of India in particular. Thus, *Dominus Iesus* is in effect a document meant for the Church in the *East* (Asia). Yet, the observation is that there has been little response from the many bishops and theologians of Asia. It seems that the Asians, to whom *Dominus Iesus* was targeted, have not been altogether vociferous in rebutting it. Or, have they?!

Even if many may not be aware, the Asian Church had actually anticipated *Dominus Iesus* in that she was working out a response even before the Vatican's document came into being. In fact, soon after the Vatican Declaration was issued in September 2000, the Asian Church, through the

1. From Interview with Cardinal Josef Ratzinger, published on 22 September, 2000 by Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. Quote here taken from <http://www.ewtn.com/>

Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences (FABC), and specifically its Office of Theological Concerns (OTC), issued a document on *Doing Asian Theology in Asia Today* within a month. This document was published by the FABC's Central Secretariat in Hong Kong in October 2000. The issues addressed in *Dominus Iesus* are the very same ones addressed in the FABC-OTC document, entitled *Methodology: Asian Christian Theology*. It is worthwhile to note that an FABC-OTC document is not simply a theological treatise produced by one or two theologians, but one which has undergone a highly consultative process with its members, comprised of theologians appointed by each and every Episcopal Conference represented in the FABC. Together with the bishop-members (who are also theologians in their own right), the OTC members work through a topic over a period of several years before it is finally approved for publication. The present document under discussion was worked through over a period of three years and was finally approved in May 2000, shortly after the CDF Plenary Assembly which met a month or two earlier, and whose product is *Dominus Iesus*. Thus, in a way, one can say that the FABC-OTC document is Asia's highest ecclesial body responding to the Vatican document, *Dominus Iesus*. The response, of course, was being worked out even before the Vatican's CDF began work on *Dominus Iesus*! But, perhaps, that is how the Holy Spirit works, in ever mysterious ways! It will do us well, at this juncture, to look at the nature of this FABC - OTC document and compare it with that of *Dominus Iesus*. In view of the limitation of space, the survey is necessarily cursory.

If the central concern of *Dominus Iesus* was with religious relativism, the FABC-OTC's paper on *Doing Theology in Asia Today* actually begins its 99-page document by addressing the threat of relativism. Pointing out that pluralism in theological method need not always entail a radical subjectivism or relativism, in the sense of claiming that all points of view are equally valid, it then goes on to say that just because certain persons and groups are misled in their search for truth, and just because they tend to perceive pluralism as relativism, or just because they tend to relativise all reality, we cannot conclude that all pluralism leads to relativism (p. 6). The document's starting point, therefore, is that there is a plurality of methods in doing theology, just as the world created by God is pluriform (p. 4). Moreover, the Church itself has already a long history of pluralism, especially in theology. This was evident from the very beginning as both within the Old and New Testaments themselves, there is a rich variety of theologies (p.6). The document then points out that the Second Vatican Council promoted pluralism in theology, when it said that the gospel message needs to be adapted according to each culture [ref. GS 44] (p. 7). It also reminds that ever since its birth in 1970, FABC has always advocated pluralism in theology

and has even asserted that *pluralism should not be a threat to our Christian unity, but on the contrary, a positive and creative sign that our unity is deeper than whatever the concrete technical analysis or viewpoints might show: a genuine value that emphasises unity in diversity* (p. 8). The FABC-OTC document then responsibly points out that the Church cannot allow doctrinal irresponsibility or indifferentism and that legitimate theological plurallism ought to meet the basic standards of revelation [as conveyed through Scripture and Tradition] of *sensus fidelium* [as contained in the faith of the People of God as a whole], and of the Magisterium of the Church (p. 10).

With that as framework, the FABC-OTC document then speaks of the great flowering of theological thinking evident all over Asia as a continuation of the tradition of the Church, a living tradition which today in Asia experiences an encounter with other Asian religious traditions and Asian cultures (p. 2). Hence, if *Dominus Iesus* is apprehensive about the influence of the other religious traditions and relegates them to *belief* and *religious experience still in search of the absolute truth* (*DI*, n.12), the FABC-OTC document informs that today Asians are doing theology and drawing nourishment from their Asian cultures where *a sense of the Sacred is fundamental* and where there is a respect for the Sacred and for the experience of the Sacred of various communities and religious traditions (p.2). It then goes on to say that given the overriding value of harmony, Asian Christians will be looking for ways to integrate the experience of Asia, the experience of their own forebears, and hence their own psyche, into their Christian faith (p. 3). It is clear, therefore, that the Asian Christian is open to dialogue, a dialogue based on profound respect for individuals, communities *and their religious traditions* (p. 3). Compare this with *Dominus Iesus* which first of all, looks at dialogue instrumentally, in the service of the Church's proclamation of Jesus Christ (*DI*, n. 2) and which, secondly, will only grant the respect and equality to the personal dignity of the parties in dialogue but not to doctrinal content (*DI*, n. 22) and certainly not to the religions, especially when they contain *gaps, insufficiencies and errors* (*DI*, n. 8) and when *it is also certain that objectively speaking they are in a gravely deficient situation* (*DI*, n. 22).

The FABC-OTC document then goes on to discuss the various sources and resources of theology: The cultures of peoples, the history of their struggles, their religions, their religious scriptures, oral traditions, popular religiosity, economic and political realities and world events, historical personages, stories of oppressed people crying for justice, freedom, dignity, life, and solidarity become *resources of theology*, and assume *methodological importance* in our context (p. 29). These sources and resources, of course, far surpass those of *Dominus Iesus*, a theology conspicuous for its

absence of any discussions of the poor and marginalised or the contextual realities of the peoples. On the other hand, the FABC-OTC document not only regards the cultures, religions, and contexts of the peoples as resources of theology, but also *sees in them the action of the Spirit* (p. 37). Unlike *Dominus Iesus* which sees the action of the Spirit in the cultures and religions as *a preparation for the Gospel* (*DI*, n.12), the FABC-OTC document sees the action of the Spirit in the context of the *enrichment of human life, and in the resurrection of the humiliated and the downtrodden* (p. 37).

As if to demonstrate its seriousness of taking the cultures and religions as such, the document *Doing Theology in Asia Today* then spends about half the total number of pages of the entire text exploring how followers of other religions interpret their own scriptural texts, with the view of learning from them as *these ancient approaches to texts developed in the various cultures of Asia are [also as much] part of the heritage of Asian Christians* (p. 40). Unlike *Dominus Iesus* which reserves the designation of *inspired texts* to the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments (*DI*, n. 8), the FABC-OTC document asserts that *Asian Christian exegetes accept the inspiration of the Scriptures of other religions as a mystery that harmonises with the Incarnation of the divine Logos in Jesus Christ* (p. 40). This follows from the principle that the *Asian way is one of integration and inclusion* (p. 3), and certainly not one of absoluteness or exclusion, principles which *Dominus Iesus* seems to suggest (*DI*, n. 15). For Asians, rather than saying *A is true, so B must be false*, the Asian tends to say *A is true, and B is also true in some sense* (p. 3). Lest the charge of relativism be levied here, the FABC-OTC quickly points out that there is but one Truth; but Truth is a Mystery which we approach reverently (p. 3).

It is this reverence of Mystery, expressed in the other religions, their cultural traditions, their scriptures, and their followers, which Asian theology has to display. It is a reverence which does not pass *a priori* judgement upon the other. It is also a reverence which respects the maturity and integrity of its own members of the faith, trusting that life is but a pilgrimage and a never ending journey of discovery. Asian theology, therefore, is not absolutist and acknowledges that it is far from being a finished product (p. 3). It is certainly not a theology which requires its faithful to *firmly believe* or to respond in *obedience of faith* or to offer *full submission*. It is but a theology which encourages the Church, the people of God, living amongst all of God's people (Eph.1:15), to continue the search for holiness or harmony with the mystery of God, the mystery of Jesus Christ, and the mystery of the Church (p. 43).

Theological Pluralism as Repressive Tolerance

James Fredericks

In a letter to Cardinal Roger Mahoney, Archbishop of Los Angeles, members of the Hindu-Roman Catholic dialogue group responded to *Dominus Iesus* and the scandal. It has created both in India and in the United States. The letter informed the Cardinal that the non-Roman Catholics among us “resist any attempt to be converted to the Roman Catholic faith”, a reference to the declaration’s claim that interreligious dialogue is “part of the Church’s evangelizing mission” (§ 2). The signatories to the letter go on to state that while they “understand the need for faiths to hold firm within their own belief systems”, even still, they “find contradictory the notion ... that there can be equality of persons but no equality of doctrinal content”. This statement I take to be a statement of support for a “pluralist” model of religious diversity which *Dominus Iesus* sharply rejects. This letter, which was signed not only by the Hindu participants in the dialogue group but also by some of its Catholic members, is illustrative of the struggle currently taking place within the Roman Catholic church both in the United States, where I do my ministry as a theologian, and also in India, where I have never been. The letter singles out problems having to do with the practice of interreligious dialogue and also the pluralist theology of religions. I think these two issues are intimately related.

With its mean-spirited words in regard to other religious paths, *Dominus Iesus* has given scandal to the faithful. Although I must protest its harsh rhetoric, I am in fundamental agreement with the declaration’s rejection of pluralist theologies of religion. Catholic Christianity does not claim that Vaisnavite or Shaivite Hindus are strangers to Christ. For all its tactlessness, *Dominus Iesus* does not claim this either. Neither does Roman Catholic Christianity claim that Christ is but one way among others to salvation.

Christian pluralists who take this position in dialogue with Hindu believers should make very clear to their dialogue partners that this view does not accurately represent the Christian tradition.

There is another objection to pluralist theologies not mentioned in the document, an objection that makes pluralist theologies particularly important to the church in the United States and perhaps to the church in India as well. Theologies of religious pluralism are examples of what Herbert Marcuse has called, with irony, "repressive tolerance"¹. In the West, tolerance can be misused ideologically to obscure the moral and political implications of difference and to suppress social criticism. Marcuse recognizes this as a particularly subtle and sophisticated form of repression.

Pluralist theologies are a form of repressive tolerance, at least in the West. These theologies function ideologically to legitimize western modernity and its social structures. For example, western societies have been very successful in protecting themselves from Christian social criticism by privatizing belief. In doing so, pluralist theologies serve the agenda of modernity. If all religions are equally valid paths leading to the same transcendent truth, then religious belief becomes a personal matter of subjective opinion of temperament. Once privatized, religion can then become yet another commodity to be consumed by individuals who make choices about not only what brand of soap they wish to purchase, but what religion they wish to practice. The privatization of religion becomes repressive when public claims to superiority or normativity by religious groups are castigated as "intolerance".

India, of course, has its own, Hindu-based, pluralist theologies. Might pluralist theologies be a form of repressive tolerance in India? The reflections that follow, I hope, will be taken as probings offered in the interest of a deeper discussion of the meaning of *Dominus Iesus* for the church in India.

Stanley Samartha, writing in 1987, calls all Christians to accept what he calls India's "normative plurality" which has led to a "particular attitude toward religious dissent. "As an example, he mentions the way Hinduism has been able "to overcome the challenge of the Buddha". Happily, at least

1. See Herbert Marcuse, "Repressive Tolerance", in *A Critique of Pure Tolerance*, by Robert Wolff, Barrington Moore, and Herbert Marcuse, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965), pp. 81-123.

for Samartha, Buddhism has been “co-opted into the Hindu structure of the *avatars*”². In Samartha’s view, early Buddhism’s rejection of Vedic authority and Brahmanical claims to caste superiority were a cause of social disturbance within India. The Buddhist community was rendered more palatable by means of a Hindu pluralist theology. The distinctiveness of Buddhist *dharma* was incorporated within Indian society as yet another current in the great river of truth in a way that undermined the Buddhist critique of Brahmanism. From my North American context, I am baffled that Samartha finds this “co-opting” and “overcoming” of Buddhism praiseworthy. Certainly, the history of western colonialism and neo-colonialism provides a context for assessing the meaning of *Dominus Iesus* for the church in India. Does not the fate of Buddhism also provide a context for assessing the document?

Faced with this pastoral and theological challenge, does *Dominus Iesus* constitute a resource for the church in India? I would think not. In North America at least, Christians very much need to develop practical and theological skills in regard to dialogue with their non-Christian neighbors. I speak of a dialogue that honors religious differences and recognizes in those differences genuine theological significance for Christian believers. *Dominus Iesus* has almost nothing to say about interreligious dialogue. The declaration’s sole statement on the matter is to be found in section two, where dialogue is seen as part of the Church’s evangelizing mission (§ 2). Shamefully, *Dominus Iesus* is all too representative of the underdevelopment of official church teachings regarding the nature and practice of interreligious dialogue. The irresponsibly harsh language the declaration uses in regard to believers who follow other paths has been a cause of scandal. In the long run, perhaps the greater scandal lies in the poverty of what this document has to say about the theology and practice of interreligious dialogue.

Who will teach the church how to dialogue? Here, the Indian church can offer a great service to the church beyond its borders. This will not be the case if Indian theologians adopt a pluralist theology of religions, for these theologies undermine the value of interreligious dialogue by insisting that tolerance among religious believers can be achieved only when the religions themselves jettison anything of real theological significance that would set

2. “The Cross and the Rainbow: Christ in a Multi-religious Culture”, in *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*. Hick and Knitter eds. (Matyknoll: Orbis 1987), p. 73.

them apart from any other religion as unique and unsurpassed. "Tolerance" is achieved by means of the suppression of genuine differences. If the differences that distinguish religions are of no real soteriological significance, then no religion need be taken seriously as genuinely different position that might call my faith into question or enrich my faith. In this, pluralist theologies reveal their collusion with the repressive tolerance of western modernity and perhaps - I leave this as an open question - modern India as well.

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***Dominus Jesus* Rewritten**

Sebastian Painnadath

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) in its Declaration *Dominus Jesus* seems to rely heavily on the documents of II Vatican Council. But there is a definite shift from the language and perspectives of the Council. The concern of the Council was to open the windows of the Church to the modern world with a language of dialogue with cultures and religions. The CDF document is aimed at 'refuting specific positions that are erroneous or ambiguous'(3) . In fulfilling its duty of defending the Catholic faith CDF makes selective quotes from the documents of the Church. Not one text of Pope Paul VI is cited in this CDF document. There are thirty references to three Encyclicals of Pope John Paul II: twenty two of them refer to *Redemptoris Missio*. No quotation is taken from *Redemptor Hominis* or *Tertio Millennio adveniente* or *Ecclesia in Asia* where the Pope speaks explicitly on dialogue with religions and cultures. Not a single reference is made to the innumerable talks and allocutions Pope John Paul II gave to interreligious assemblies during his visits to other continents. The Meeting of the spiritual leaders of World Religions at Assisi, 1986, is apparently a non-event for CDF. The bold steps the Holy Father has been taking to meet representatives of other religions world-wide have been totally ignored by the CDF in this document. Though II Vatican Council teaches that the *collegium* of the Bishops forms an integral part of the Magisterium of the Church, the CDF in composing this document pays no heed to what the Asian Bishops, who guide the local Churches in a pluralistic milieu, have been saying in the last thirty years. No reference is made to the documents of the Federation of the Asian Bishops Conferences, not even to the Asian Synod. This being the case, the Catholics of Asia would ask: Whose document is this? Whose concerns are taken up here?

The Second Vatican Council was something like a renewed Pentecost experience for the Church: the Catholics became increasingly sensitive to the transforming power and presence of the Spirit of Christ in the world. With great awe and respect Catholics began to meet believers of other religions for they felt in them *the secret presence of God* (AG.9), *the unseen work of grace* (GS.22). A new culture of dialogue was initiated in the Church world-wide, and the two Popes gave significant leadership to this. "Dialogue is the new way of being the Church", Pope Paul VI said way back in 1964 (ES. 63). "With believers of other religions we are on a fraternal pilgrimage", Pope John Paul II said at Assisi, 1986. During the last thirty five years new perspectives on Church's relations to other religions have evolved across the continents: in papal allocutions, in the pastoral letters of local bishops, in the statements of the national and continental bishops conferences, in the theological writings and conferences, in the inter-religious projects of social justice and especially in the diverse inter-religious assemblies organised by the local Church authorities in a responsible way. At the basis of all this the good neighbourly relations of Catholics with sisters and brothers of other religions in their day to day life offer a living *locus theologicus* to perceive the work of the Spirit in the pluralistic milieu of today. All this forms the *sensus fidelium*, which cannot be overlooked when an assessment is made on the Church's attitude to other religions.

A rewriting of the CDF document may be technically impossible. But *Dominus Jesus* is being rewritten in the hearts of millions of Catholics in Asia in the light of the following words of the Holy Father and of their bishops. These words inspire them to be deeply rooted in Christ-experience and to open their hearts genuinely to believers of other religions 'in order to acknowledge, preserve and promote the spiritual and moral goods found in them, as well as the values in their society and culture' (NA.2). The *sensus fidelium* articulated in these inspiring words of the Popes and of the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences has not been taken into account in the perspectives of the CDF statements on other religions.

1. The other religions have no right to exist in God's plan of salvation

The CDF text categorically states:

"The Church's constant missionary proclamation is endangered today by relativistic theories which seek to justify religious pluralism, not only *de facto*, but also *de jure* (or in principle)" (4).

What is implied in this statement is that the plurality of religions has no *de jure* validity in the salvific plan of God; only one religion has the theological right to exist, i.e., Christianity. If so there is no basis to proclaim religious freedom as a fundamental right of human existence (DH) or dialogue as an integral element of Christian existence (NA) in II Vatican Council !

What do the Popes say to this?

"Religion is a cry uttered in the mysterious immensity of Being. Religion is the breath that the modern man needs more and more: to live." (Paul VI. Rome, 12.12.1972)

"The Fathers of II Vatican Council saw in the great religious creeds a very significant, though incomplete, expression of the religious genius of mankind, a testimony of the secret action carried out in the course of centuries by the grace of the Holy Spirit" (Paul VI. To Secretariat for Non-Christians, 06.07.1974)

"Religions are many and varied, and they reflect the desire of men and women down through the ages to enter into a relationship with the Absolute Being." (John Paul II. Assisi, 27.10.1986)

"Religious freedom therefore constitutes the very heart of human rights. Its inviolability is such that individuals must be recognised as having the right even to change their religion, if their conscience so demands." (John Paul II Message to the World Day of Peace, 01.01.1999)

"...the great religious and sapiential traditions of East and West, from which the interior and mysterious workings of the Holy Spirit are not absent..." (John Paul II, VS. 94)

The Asian Bishops speak of the valid existence of religions in the plan of God:

"In dialogue we accept the great religious traditions of our people as significant and positive elements in the economy of God's design of salvation. In them we recognise and respect profound spiritual and ethical meanings and values. Over many centuries they have been the treasury of the religious experience of our ancestors, from which our contemporaries do not cease to draw light and strength. How can we not give them reverence and honour? And how can we not acknowledge that God has drawn our peoples to Himself through them?" (FABC, I.Plenary Assembly Statement, 1974,14.(14)

"We Christians believe that God's saving will is at work, in many different ways, in all religions...The Spirit of Christ is active outside the bounds of the visible Church. His ways are mysterious and unfathomable. No one can dictate the direction of His grace". (FABC. BIRA-II. 1979, 12 (115)

"Our belief in the universal salvific will of God leads us to affirm the initiative of God active in other living faiths." (FABC. Consultation on Christian presence among Muslims, 1983, 8 (166)

"Diversity is not something to be regretted or abolished, but to be rejoiced over and promoted, since it represents richness and strength...The test of true harmony lies in the acceptance of diversity as richness." (FABC. BIRA-IV-11, 15 (321)

"We affirm the stance of *receptive pluralism*. That is, the many ways of responding to the prompting of the Holy Spirit must be continually in conversation with one another." (FABC. BIRA-IV-3, 16 (261)

2. The other religions have no experience of faith,

but only belief systems

"The distinction between theological faith and belief in the other religions must be firmly held. If faith is the acceptance in grace of revealed truth, which 'makes it possible to penetrate the mystery in a way that allows us to understand it coherently', then belief, in the other religions, is that sum of experience and thought that constitutes the human treasury of wisdom and religious aspiration, which man in his search for truth has conceived and acted upon in his relationship to God and the Absolute." (7)

With this statement CDF seems to uphold that faith on the basis of divine revelation is not found in other religions, where only elements of belief devised by the human agents are to be found. Does'nt it imply the old distinction between supernatural religion and natural religion? Is not the divine Spirit active in the Scriptures and symbols of other religions? If the Spirit communicates through them, the response of reception is a response in faith: acceptance in grace of truth revealed by the divine Spirit.

The Popes have said this:

"The Church's relationship with other religions is dictated by a twofold respect: respect for man in his quest for answers to the deepest questions of his life, and respect for the action of the Spirit in man.- This has guided me in my meetings with a wide variety of peoples." (John Paul II. RM. 29)

"The Spirit of truth is operating outside the visible confines of the Mystical Body." (John Paul II. RH. 6)

"God does not fail to make himself present in many ways, not only to individuals but also to entire peoples through their spiritual riches, of which their religions are the main and essential expression." (John Paul II. RM.55)

"The Spirit's presence and activity affect not only individuals but also society and history, peoples, cultures and religions." (John Paul II, Rome, 09.09.1998)

"Dialogue is demanded by a deep respect for everything that has been brought about in human beings by the Spirit who blows where he wills." (John Paul II. RM. 56)

The Asian Bishops perceive the salvific work of the Spirit of God in other religions.

"It is an inescapable truth that God's Spirit is at work in all religious traditions, moving the faithful believers of each religious tradition to a greater commitment to truth and more authentic communion within and beyond their own tradition. For us Christians, our way to participation in God's enterprise is Jesus, who died in order to give life." (FABC. BIRA-IV-12, 7 (326)

"It is the same Spirit, who has been active in the incarnation, life, death and resurrection of Jesus and in the Church, who was active amongst all peoples before Incarnation and is active amongst the nations, religions and peoples of Asia today." (FABC. BIRA -IV-3, 6 (259)

"The great religions of Asia with their respective creeds, cults and codes reveal to us diverse ways of responding to God whose Spirit is active in all peoples and cultures." (FABC BIRA- IV-7, 12 (310)

"In the rich diversity of ancient cultures and faiths is a vision of unity in diversity, a communion of life among diverse peoples. With the eyes of the heart, with our faith, we need to understand it as the work of the creative Spirit of the God of Life, who in all things and among every people is healing, renewing and recreating in ever new, ever mysterious ways." (FABC. Plenary Assembly Statement, 1995, 11 (5)

3. The other religions have no divine origin

"Some prayers and rituals of the other religions may assume a role of preparation for the Gospel, in that they are occasions or pedagogical helps in which the human heart is prompted to open to the action of God. One cannot attribute to these, however, a divine origin or an

ex opere operato salvific efficacy, which is proper to the Christian sacraments. Furthermore, it cannot be overlooked that other rituals, insofar as they depend on superstitions or other errors (cf. I Cor. 10,20-21) constitute an obstacle to salvation.“ (21)

The CDF assessment of the other religions in this text is evidently negative: in themselves they have no divine origin, no salvific efficacy, but rather they are prone to be *obstacle to salvation*. The question that comes from the other side would be: how can you Christians make such judgements on us from within your personal or communal religious experience? Our faith in Christ has to be genuine and our Christian way of life has to be authentic. For that we need not pass judgement on God's ways with others, and their ways with God. *Do not judge!* (Mt. 7,1)

What do the Popes say to this:

"We feel close to those who have in common with us the momentous search for the Divine and a trusting submission to the laws of Heaven, those who look to religions for answers to the great problems which confront and torment mankind, and who find therein their strength and their hope." (Paul VI. To followers of other religions, Manila, 28.11.1970)

"We can call God by many names, without ever completely exhausting his reality, which is beyond us." (John Paul II. To representatives of other religions, Senegal, 20.02.1992)

"Interreligious dialogue at its deepest level is always a dialogue of salvation because it seeks to discover, clarify and understand better the signs of the age-long dialogue which God maintains with mankind." (John Paul II to the Pont. Council for Dialogue, 13.11.1992)

Asian bishops discern salvific efficacy in other religions.

"Down through the centuries the ancient religions of the Orient have given light and strength to our ancestors. They have expressed the noblest longings in the hearts of our people, our deepest joys and sorrows. Their temples have been the home of contemplation and prayer. They have shaped our history, and our way of thinking. They are part of our culture. For us in Asia, they have been the doorway to God." (FABC. Plenary Assembly Statement, 1974, 12, (2)

"The religious traditions of Asia command our respect because of the spiritual and human values enshrined in them. These are expressions of the presence of God's Word and of the universal action of his Spirit in them." (FABC Theological Consultation Statement, 1991, 43 (344)

"Acknowledge the work of the Holy Spirit both in the Church and beyond its visible boundaries, since the Spirit acts in freedom and His action cannot be reduced to persons, traditions, institutions or problems of relationships. The Spirit's action, His presence and ministry can - and must - be discerned in other religions and even secular movements that may be shaped and leading to the Kingdom of God." (FABC. BIRA- IV-1, 10 (249)

["It would be difficult to think that what the Holy Spirit works in the hearts of men taken as individuals would have salvific value, and not think that what the Holy Spirit works in the religions and cultures would not have such value. Given the explicit recognition of the presence of the Spirit of Christ in the religions, one cannot exclude the possibility that they exercise, as such, a certain salvific function." (International Theological Commission, 1997, 84)]

4. Believers of other religions are not equal dialogue-partners for Christians

"Equality, which is a presupposition of interreligious dialogue, refers to the equal personal dignity of the parties in dialogue, not to doctrinal content, nor even less to the position of Jesus Christ - who is God himself made man- in relation to the founders of the other religions. (23). Objectively speaking, the followers of other religions are in a gravely deficient situation in comparison with those, who , in the Church, have the fullness of the means of salvation. " (22)

With this position CDF makes genuine inter-religious dialogue impossible. Inter-religious dialogue demands that we Christians encounter the other as the *religiously* other: not merely as human individuals but as believers of a particular religion. The process is not just an interpersonal conversation, but an inter-religious dialogue. We have to respect the religious world of the other without in any way evaluating it in comparison with that of ours, nor pre-judging it as *gravely deficient*. If *equality is the presupposition of inter-religious dialogue*, any presumption that the religion of the other is of an inferior quality would make inter-religious dialogue dishonest in relation to the other, and insensitive to the Spirit that works through the religion of the other.

The Popes spoke of the other religions with great respect:

"There is no dialogue possible without a thorough understanding of the other. It is necessary to beyond the limits of all language, cultural reflexes, even polemics and mistrust, to be open to things greater than ourselves and to universality...Everyone rightly expects to be fully recognised by the

other and loved for his own sake, with the values and differences of his own culture. Without love there is no real knowledge." (Paul VI. to the Secretariat for Non-christians, 05.10.1972)

"I am fully convinced that the time is ripe in human history for followers of various religions to seek a new respect for one another." (John Paul II. Colombo, 21.01.1995)

"The differences are a less important element, when confronted with the unity which is radical, fundamental and decisive." (John Paul II, Rome, 22.12.1986)

"Loyalty demands that we should recognise and respect our differences. We must respect each other, and we must also stimulate each other in good works on the path of God." (John Paul II to Muslims in Morocco, 19.08.1985)

"The *difference* which some find so threatening can, through respectful dialogue, become the source of a deeper understanding of the mystery of human existence." (John Paul II, Adress to UNO, 05.10.1995)

"By dialogue we let God be present in our midst, for as we open ourselves in dialogue to one another, we also open ourselves to God. The fruit of dialogue is union between people and union of people with God, who is the source and revealer of all truth, and whose Spirit guides men in freedom only when they meet one another in all honesty and love." (John Paul II. to representatives of religions, Madras, 05.02.1986)

"Only through interreligious dialogue can the powerful role of religious faith be placed at the service of peace through the elimination of prejudice and intolerance, to the glory of God in whose oneness we all believe." (John Paul II to the Dialogue Unit, Rome, 21.06.1991)

The Asian bishops call for respecting the religious believers in their otherness

"We enter as equal partners into the dialogue in a mutuality of sharing and enrichment contributing to mutual growth. It excludes any sense of competition. Rather it centres on each other's values." (FABC. BIRA-I, 12 (111)

"A factor inhibiting dialogue is a triumphalistic attitude...Such an attitude makes impossible any true dialogue, which presupposes attitudes of humility, openness and equality as persons, without sacrificing one's religious identity." (FABC. BIRA- II, 7 (114).

"Transparency and utter truthfulness demand that there be no *hidden agenda*, that no betrayal or indelicate behaviour trespass upon this sacred ground, that there be no manipulation of any kind." (FABC. BIRA- IV-12, 45 (332)

"Dialogue initiatives at all levels should be transparent. The otherness of the other should always be respected in the process of dialogue." (FABC. BIRA- V-3, 8/4(159)

"Dialogue aimed at *converting* the other to one's own religious faith and tradition is dishonest and unethical: it is not the way of harmony." (FABC. BIRA- V-3, 7(158)

We are copilgrims

An image that resonates well with the Asian religious psyche is that of pilgrimage. People on a pilgrimage have the same goal, though they may take different routes towards the goal. And on the way they share with one another their spiritual experiences and struggles. Believers of different religions are like co-pilgrims moving towards God. On the way they share among themselves their experience of God, their perceptions and perspectives, their struggles and agonies. This is a mutually enriching process in which one learns from the others; each one is encouraged and criticised by the others as well. The divine goal is always transcendent, yet immanent, far and near.

The Popes use this imagery to speak of a culture of dialogue

"We must meet as pilgrims who set out to find God - not in buildings of stone but in human hearts." (Paul VI. to representatives of religions, Bombay, 03.12.1964)

"On this earth we are pilgrims to the Absolute and Eternal, who alone can save and satisfy the heart of the human person." (John Paul II. To the Buddhists and Shintoists, Rome, 20.02.1980)

"We are all pilgrims on the path of seeking to do God's will in everything. Let good will and peace govern our relations! Let us be always willing to speak to each other and listen to each other." (John Paul II. Gambia, 23.02.1992)

"God would like the developing history of humanity to be a fraternal journey in which we accompany one another towards the transcendent goal which he sets for us. Either we walk together in peace and harmony, or we drift apart and ruin ourselves and others." (John Paul II. Inter-religious Meeting, Assisi, 27.10.1986)

"May God guide us and bless us as we strive to walk together, hand in hand, and build together a world of peace." (John Paul II. Delhi, 01.02.1986)

"We are all pilgrims to the dawn of the new millennium: may it be a dawn marked by God's peace." (Message to the Prayer Day at Assisi, 07.09.1994)

"It is necessary and urgent to find again the desire and determination to walk together to build a more united world, overcoming special interests of peoples, ethnic groups and nations. What an important task religions can carry out in this regard!" (John Paul II Message to Interreligious Prayer Meeting in Milan, 16.09.1993)

"With all genuinely religious people the Church continues her pilgrimage through history towards the eternal contemplation of God in the splendour of his glory." (John Paul II. Rome, 19.03.1999)

"What India offers to the world specifically is a noble spiritual vision of man: man, a pilgrim of the Absolute, travelling towards a goal, seeking the face of God." (John Paul II to the Followers of various religions, New Delhi, 02.02.1986)

The Asian bishops describe interreligious fellowship as a spiritual pilgrimage.

"For us interreligious dialogue flows from the nature of the Church, a community in pilgrimage journeying with peoples of other faiths towards the Kingdom that is to come. Interreligious dialogue is an ongoing process of common search for mutual understanding and trust, leading us and our fellow pilgrims towards a deeper appreciation of truth - the truth about God and the human person." (FABC. BIRA IV-4, 2 (300)

"The Church is called to be a community of dialogue. This dialogical model is in fact a new way of being Church." (FABC. BIRA-12, 48 (332)

"As God's pilgrim people the Church shares the longings and desires of all to come closer to the Father, while as God's eschatological people, it announces Jesus Christ and his good news to all." (FABC BIRA- III, 3 (120)

"This age of journeying with sisters and brothers of Asian religions is a privileged moment (*kairos*) for the Church to return to its original call." (FABC. FEISA- I, 7,5,1)

"Our journey in the footsteps of Jesus motivates us to join the spiritual pilgrimage of sisters and brothers of Asian religions in pursuit of being one in Divine Life." (FABC-FEISA-I, 7.2.1.(60)

We Christians in Asia believe in Jesus Christ the Saviour and confess with Peter: *You are the Son of the Living God*. And we live out this confession in an authentic way in the midst of the poor of Asia and the believers of other religions. We take our faith in Christ as a grace and a call; and we take the plurality of religions around us too as a grace and a challenge. On the route of our daily spiritual pilgrimage with sisters and brothers of other religions we share with them our Christ-experience in a way that is attuned to the values of the Gospel: not lording it over others, not claiming the possession of *absolute truth* about God, not in a way that is aggressive and exclusive. And so we are *evangelised* by others: they help us to discover the deeper mystical meaning of the mystery of God in Christ. We do not convert confessional statements into metaphysical definitions; we do not declare *our* faith experience as absolute norm for others. We like to be constantly alert to what the Spirit is telling us through the Christian community, and through other religions as well, through the poor of Asia and through the secular movements too. We realise that to be a disciple of Jesus we have to be fellow-pilgrims with believers of other religions on this continent of rich spiritual heritage and manifold religious expressions.

Sameeksha

Kalady

FABC. Federation of the Asian Bishops Conferences.

BIRA. Bishops' Institute for Inter-religious Affairs.

FEISA. Faith Encounter in Social Action.

The number in brackets refers to the page of the book: G.Rosales/ C.G. Arevalo (ed). For All the Peoples of Asia, FABC Documents Vols I-II. Claretian Publ. Quezon, 1992.

Editorial

This is a double issue of July and September Numbers of *Jeevadhara*, 2001. Jeevadhara Centre for Socio-Religious Research held two National Seminars, one last April on **Religion and Nationalism** and the other this September on **Religion and Culture**. The papers presented at the two Seminars are published in this issue of *Jeevadhara*.

Indian Society has been all through culturally and religiously pluralistic and India had until recently succeeded in maintaining its secular character with its equal treatment towards all religious, cultural, ethnic and linguistic groups. This secular and pluralistic character of India is at present under serious threat. Religion and caste are widely used and abused for selfish and political gains. The trend of a narrow nationalism based on a single religion and culture of one dominant group is gaining ground in some circles today, which may undermine the very foundations of this nation and reduce the religious minorities and subaltern groups to second class citizens.

It is true, modern secularism and the process of secularization need to be critically examined. The western approach to secularism may not be an adequate answer to India and its socio-cultural and religious realities. The term secular is very often misunderstood in India as 'anti-religious'. It is to be emphasised that secularism in India has a different meaning. It means equal respect to and treatment towards all religions and ideologies, cultural and ethnic groups. Secularism needs to be broadened and deepened today by integral humanism.

Communion and fellowship is the heart of all religions. Without communion with one another no Church can be truly Christian or

'Catholic'. Exclusion contradicts communion. Communion within one's own religion as well as with people of all other religions is a must. It calls for the creation of new relationships among all people, irrespective of religion, caste and culture. Forces of fundamentalism and communalism are to be challenged, exposed and defeated, for they deny the unity and solidarity of humankind.

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PART - I

RELIGION AND NATIONALISM

Nationalism and Religion Ambiguities and Conflicts

Felix Wilfred

Religious nationalism is a phenomenon that seems to be spreading fast, resulting in greater division, conflict and violence. The author asks whether secular nationalism could be an answer. In spite of its strength, it may not be an adequate response. He proposes the model of humanistic nationalism which maintains a healthy dialectics of particularity and universality, identity and transcendence in terms of humanising inter-group encounters. The article ends with some reflections on how Christianity could strengthen humanistic nationalism.

The last one hundred years has witnessed three different waves of nationalism.¹ Two brutal world-wars were fought by Europe in the name of nation – to expand its power or to defend it from the enemies. The Third World nationalism came up to challenge the colonial powers and their imperial sway. Since the last decades of twentieth century, we are confronted with yet another wave of nationalism whose origin is due more to internal causes and factors. The site of this third wave of nationalism is marked by religion. It is fed by the ideological inspiration offered by religious sources, symbols, etc. and is pressed into service for political ends.

At first sight, this association of nationalism with religion should appear strange. For, the process of globalisation today is a movement that purportedly tries to overcome the national boundaries. In the process, the traditional role of nations over the economic processes are undermined by the free movement of transnational capital. In the present era of modernization religions are viewed as belonging to the private

sphere. Through a process of secularisation the separation of religion and politics is effected. It should appear strange in these circumstances that religions could be such an important force as to inspire nationalism and determine the modes of governance. And yet it is a fact that we have in different parts of the world, cases of religious-nationalism.²

The violence and destruction attendant on religious-nationalism has triggered off secular forces. These forces conceive nationalism with a different set of values, and would like to see the state itself free from the clutches of religious forces. Both these types of nationalism are in clash with each other and there are mutual accusations. For example, what the secularists offer is viewed by religious nationalists simply as pseudo-secular. The secular-nationalists see nothing of religion in religious-nationalism, but only a power-agenda which instrumentalizes religion for its own vested interests.

Against this background, I think today we need to develop a third model of nationalism which would be more inclusive and humanistic. This would bring into an original synthesis some of the perennial values of the religious heritage and the secular values. Caught in a fierce controversy, the secular nationalism alone appears incapable of taking on the challenge posed by religious nationalism and the harm it is doing. What I am proposing is a third path which will attend both to universalistic concerns as well as take into account the specific internal problems of exclusion and inclusion within the same nation.

I. Religious Nationalism

To be able to understand more concretely we need to refer to some of the cases of religious-nationalism. This could be seen in Ireland where nationalism is bound up with one's identity as a Catholic or a Protestant. The Israelite nationalism is through and through religious in character, and it is animated by the ideology of Zionism and in war with Muslim Arabs within its own territory and outside. Iran is another case of religious nationalism where religion was used to mobilize the masses for a nationalist religious revolution (under the leadership of Aytollah Khomeini in 1979) against the interference of imperial forces represented by the Shah. We have other cases of religious nationalist movements in Egypt, Algeria, Afghanistan, Tibet, and in central Asian countries. In India, the operation of Hindutva as a religious nationalist

ideology and its political rise in the 1990's has created a new critical situation in the country. In most of these cases, a secularist approach to nationalism is locked in conflict with religious movements of nationalism.

Religious Overtones

All religious nationalism is not to be equated. There is difference according to the particular history, context and circumstances in which it arises. The various religious nationalism may bear similarity ("family resemblance" – Wittgenstein), but they represent quite differing phenomena which, for lack of appropriate terminology, are brought under the umbrella term of "religious nationalism". While speaking of religious nationalism, we need to be aware of the fact that the "religious" is not simply an addition. Nationalism can easily lend itself to be engineered by religious agents and religious ideology, because the "religious" in one way or other seems to be inherent in nationalism, even when it is a question of "secular nationalism". As Alexis de Tocqueville noted regarding French revolution, it was fought with a religious zeal – though it was an anti-religious revolution. If we analyse the symbols and rituals of nationalism in contemporary times, we find that they bear a lot of resemblance to religious symbols and rituals – whether it be the "*amarjyothi*" (immortal light) at the tomb of the unknown soldier or the zeal of "martydom" for one's motherland, or the speeches of leaders on occasions of national celebrations. Rightly then, Ninan Smart calls religious nationalism "*double-decker*", because the "religious" is already inherent in the conception of nationalism.³ When religion is explicitly added to it, nationalism becomes doubly so. It is opined that in Europe the waning of the influence of Christianity in the public realm was substituted by the emergence of nationalism which had religious character.

The Causes of Emergence

The emergence of religious nationalism in recent decades is due to a wide variety of factors. To begin with, there was a scepticism about secular nationalism which, according to religious nationalists, did not deliver the goods. The establishment of modern nation-state along secular lines has led to corruption and to a politics devoid of morality and ethics. In many cases an important reason for the assertion of religious nationalism is to bring back in public life a sense of morality.

Closely related to it is the preoccupation that religion did not have any role in the public sphere, which is attributed to the advent of secular thought and practice. Several religious nationalist groups see in this, the imposition of a Western ideology over the rest of the world. It should be added here that religious nationalism is not in most cases in opposition to modern forms of governance as democracy. In other words it is not the case of religious nationalism being equated simply with theocracy. Rather, while not rejecting the modern system, religious nationalism would like to determine the politics and governance through religious ideology.

Secondly, religious nationalism claims to make up for the collective character missing in secular nationalism. The latter inspired by liberal orientation sees the relationship in society in terms of individuals. The primary mode of relationship is that of the individual *vis a vis* the state or nation. On the other hand, religious nationalism is focused on the fact that society consists of groups with distinct identities. Whereas for secular nationalism, a well-determined territory with citizens is sufficient, religious nationalism sees a nation with reference to identities. Ethnicity, race, language, etc. would constitute such identities and groupings. A very important and crucial identity is that of religion. In many cases there is a practical overlapping of ethnic and religious identity, making that particular brand of nationalism "ethno-religious". A clear case in point is that of Sri Lanka. The determining identity of the nation is Sinhala understood as a race, a language and both identified with Buddhism. Another most obvious case is that of former Yugoslavia in which the Croats are identified with Catholic Christianity, the Bosnians with Islam and the Serbs with Orthodox Christianity. Religious nationalism exploits for its ends the role religion plays in identity-consciousness. In fact, one of the important means of assertion of sub-nationalities is a shared religious universe, its symbols, tenets and rites. This is illustrated by the case of formation of Sikh consciousness and religious militancy under the leadership of Bhindranwale in the 1980's.

The Language of Violence

What makes the religious nationalism a very questionable option is its proneness to violence. The violence is not simply sporadic. What is worse is that violence gets religious legitimization and sanction, and hence

it takes hold of the consciousness of the group of believers. Religions bear in themselves a radical ambiguity. Peace, justice and harmony are very much associated with religious ideals. At the same time, the same religions have been historically sources of some of the worst forms of violence.⁴ Some authors tend to think that violence is associated with religion not simply as historical contingency and accidental, but rather as an inherent element. This is for example, the thesis propounded by Rene Girard.⁵ The aggressiveness and violence found in human nature get expressed through religions, its tenets and rites (for example sacrifices). Religions legitimate violence as for example in the case of the *theory of just war*.⁶ Now when the inclination of religions is coupled with ethnic identity, as is often the case with religious nationalism, the potential for violence becomes all the greater.

Homogenisation and Demonisation

Against this background, we understand how religious nationalism finds it difficult to have any harmonious relationship with other groups and identities subsumed in the nation-state. Religious nationalism tends either to absorb and homogenise other identities through a process of co-optation, or suppresses them violently. In the first case, other identities – religious, ethnic, cultural – are to conform to the majority or politically dominant group or face the consequence of being excluded. This is for example the case with Hindutva religious nationalism which takes upon itself to define the Indian nation, and all other religious minorities have to fall within that definition of “Hindu”. The failure to do so would make the Muslims and Christians, for example, as aliens to Indian nation.⁷ It is interesting to note that, while religious nationalism claims to deal with collective identities (over against secular nationalism centred on individual), it restricts the collectivity to itself and does not extend it to other groups and collectivities in the nation. Therefore, religious nationalism everywhere has serious problems with minorities. The solution it has to offer is far from satisfying the basic requirements of minority groups. With its inherent non-accommodative tendency, religious nationalism becomes a permanent source of conflict, violence and confrontation. By construction insider/outsider polarity, it demonises those outside its fold within the same nation.

Controlling the Past

The strength and fascination of religious nationalism derive from the fact that it functions as an ideology. A very important ingredient of the construction of ideology is the engineering of history, so to say. It is said that the ones who control the past will be the ones who will determine the future. This is very much true of the strategy and modus operandi of religious nationalism. For religious nationalism, controlling the past is very important for its ideological purposes. Hence we find that religious nationalists are particular about how history is written and presented (historiography). There is an invention of the past in such a way that it justifies the politics and programmes of religious nationalists. Very often religious nationalism transforms myths and stories into histories. Myths so manipulated can be served to mobilize the masses searching for absolute certainties which seem to elude them in everyday life. Speaking of the role ideology plays, Hansen observes,

Ideological constructions are vitalized and empowered in two ways. The first and most obvious part of their attraction lies in their ability to convert the experience of amorphous, meaningless contingency into ostensibly stable symbolic order that promises to close the gap in social existence through construction of a more harmonious social world.⁸

In this type of religious-nationalist history, what professional historians find primarily objectionable is that the methods and procedures that are part of the discipline of history are simply undermined for ideological ends.⁹ Further, the historiography of religious-nationalists present a picture of India that is one in culture, tradition, history, etc. This is supposed to counter the picture of an internally divided India presented by the colonial history which helped them with the ideological construction needed to legitimise their rule. Given this background, religious nationalists present a supposedly comprehensive history, but which, in fact, sets aside the histories of subaltern peoples. In this regard, the well-known historian K.N. Panikkar notes,

The cultural past the nationalist historiography tried to reclaim was clearly Brahminical and upper caste. The culture of those outside this circle did not attract any attention. The oppressed and the marginalized did not enter into its reckoning and their voices were conspicuously absent... [T]herefore their interests

and aspirations were outside the purview of the nationalist historiography. The nationalist historiography was hence an inadequate representation of the interests of the nation.¹⁰

Essentialization of Culture

What happens in the area of historiography happens also in other realms of the life of the nation. Like history, the representation of culture by religious nationalists is the object of contestation for various reasons. The cultural construction of the nation, like its historiography, is made in such a way as to turn some groups of people into outsiders and enemies.

The close relationship between religion and culture is well known to anthropologists and historians of religions. In spite of the fact of the close association between the two, there is also a distinction. But what happens with religious nationalism is that it identifies the religion of the majority or the powerful group with the culture of the nation. A second flaw is that culture is essentialized, that is to say culture is seen as something static. But in fact we know culture is fluid precisely because a culture grows out of constant encounter with peoples and groups. It is this kind of osmosis which accounts for the vitality of any culture. But what happens with nationalism is that it continues to inhabit a cultural world that has changed, and indeed very drastically. The religious nationalists prefer to inhabit an essentialized cultural world of the past and project it as the model, and even more as the norm and criterion for everyone else. This essentialized culture is sought to be further cemented by a presumed common bond of race and blood. The failure to rise up to the dynamics of culture and its movement turns the religious nationalism atavistic and inward-looking.

II. Secular Nationalism

Change of Scenario

Secular nationalism is antithetic to religious nationalism, even though, not seldom religious nationalists claim to be true secularists, and brand those not of their ideology as “pseudo-secularists”. This already gives us an inkling into the controversies surrounding the concept of secularism at the global level, and especially in our country.¹¹ If we retrace the path at world level in the past half a century or so, we will

note that the secular nationalism was projected as a sign of advancement in as much as it represents overcoming of state and governance based on “primordial identities”. It is enough to recall how stalwarts of secular nationalism such as Jawharlal Nehru in our country and Nazar in Egypt were cult figures in their own times for having risen above the particular identities. But from the late seventies, the scenario changed so rapidly. The Iranian revolution of 1979 remains a watershed challenging the projection of secular nationalism as an ideal for the developing countries. Besides, in the context of religious conflicts, the secular is being pointed out as something which is connected with Christianity. We will come back to this thought in the fourth section of our essay.

Secularism Contested

The most common problem with secular nationalism is that the conception of “secular” is western in its origin and history. This sentiment is expressed widely and becomes an important reason to challenge its credibility as well as viability in pluri-cultural and multi-religious societies. This is something very similar to the discussion surrounding the universality of human rights. A cultural argument is being employed by many authoritarian states to stigmatise human rights as western so that they do not come under scrutiny for the gross violations they make. Like human rights, we may get bogged down by theoretical discussion on the western character of secularism. But it is important to go more into the content and significance of secularism in connection with nationalism.

One of the things connected with secularism is the relationship between religion and politics, between private beliefs and public sphere. Even though, secularism had at some time in its western history the connotation of anti-religious, today few would take it in that sense. The question today is more the separation of religion and public life. Here precisely is the problem. What kind of separation is the crucial issue? The distinction between private/public as interpretative category has become problematic, and this is not only with regard to religion but with economy as well, for example.¹² If we take the practice, it is difficult to find instances in which there is a total separation of the two. In countries like India, given the importance of religious identities, it is unrealistic to expect that people make a complete separation between the two realms.

What we have said is precisely the reason why another interpretation of secularism was evolved in conjunction with the ideal of nationalism. This conception in essence is the way of regulating the inter-relationship among the various identities and groups in a polity, so that they peacefully co-exist. This is the sense in which in India secularism has been understood. It means that the state itself does not become partisan to any particular group, nor does it privilege any particular religion. The equidistance to all religions became the quintessence of secularism and this is ensured in the Constitution.

The crisis of secular nationalism has come about not simply on ideological grounds I referred to earlier, but more from the side of practice. Though the state may be run against constitutionally secular lines, the *realpolitik* and practical expediency have led it to support one group or the other according to its political fortunes. Even more, if the state is run under the pressure of numerical majority, the situation becomes very critical for minorities and other identities.

The Democratic Mask

That raises the question about the relationship of formal democracy and nationalism in the secular frame-work. The secular ideal of democracy is often procedural and formal. If democracy is the prevalence of the will of majority in governance, then this is a very dangerous conception since under the cloak of democracy what would happen is the "tyranny of the majority". Rightly did John Stuart Mill in his time raised the critical question, how could a minority be free when it is forced to conform to the will of the majority. What I am trying to say is that the institution of formal democracy could co-habit with religious nationalism of majority. In this way religious nationalism becomes even more dangerous, because it can easily wear the democratic mask to impose itself on the rest of the identities in a polity. All this shows how a mere liberal and secular nationalism alone cannot respond to the issue of diversity and plurality of identities.

Citizenship and National Identity

A further question concerns the relationship between citizenship and national identity.¹³ The secular frame of thought tends in the direction of delinking these two as lasting solution. But we know that here lies a thorny question. The difficulty is not only in countries like India, but

also in the West. One needs to only take note of the divergence of views on this point between Juergen Habermas and Anthony Smith.¹⁴ Theoretically, it sounds very reasonable that the concept of state and citizenship would allow room for many “nationalities” and identities, all of whom will share the rights and privileges of citizenship. But in practice, such an approach proves to be somewhat idyllic. Multi-cultural and multi-religious societies would call for more complex kind of approach in order to ensure the rights of the various groups in the state.

To put the issue differently, the secular nationalism has to face the question of the relationship between state and nation. Obviously they cannot be equated. Being part of a state through citizenship does not resolve the problem of identity in terms of nation which has other characteristics, and is amorphous and imaginary in contrast to the institution of the state with its well-defined contours. In this connection Zygmunt Baumann observes :

And so there is a clearly defined supreme authority which make the state itself ‘real’ and clearly defined: a tough, stubborn, resistant object one cannot wish out of existence. The same cannot be said, however, about the nation. A nation is from start to finish an *imagined community*; it exists as an entity in so far as its members mentally and emotionally ‘identify themselves’ with a collective body most of whose other members they will never confront face to face. The nation becomes a mental reality as it is *imagined* as such.¹⁵

In sum, the secular approach has elements which are very important in challenging religious nationalism. But there are also many open questions, and some serious limitations. And that leads us to look for a possible new direction.

III. Inclusive and Humanistic Nationalism

The humanistic nationalism I am proposing is one which does not deny the secular nationalism. It assumes some of the important values and ideals contained in it. However it widens the scope of the secular nationalism. Further, this nationalism would allow room for the religious traditions to play a role in sustaining the universalistic ideals, without however interfering with the autonomy of the secular and temporal

realities. To be able to understand this, we need to go to some of the basic issues at stake with nationalism.

Reconciling the Polarities

In the life of the individual and groups there is a certain dialectic between the *particular* and the *universal*. Humanistic nationalism is an attempt to reconcile these two poles – two important dimensions in human life. Nationalism affirms the particularity or specificity of a group of people bonded together on the basis of language, common history, region, etc. Like religion, nationalism claims loyalty of the group, and when the affirmation of the particular becomes absolute, then it is a very dangerous course. History amply bears witness to the devastations effected by an unbridled nationalism. Enough to recall here Hitler's Nationalism and its tragedy. The legitimate particularity needs to be tempered and seasoned by a movement that transcends the particular. In concrete, this transcendence means openness to other groups, other communities and at global level other nations and cultures. In this way, nationalism will be redeemed from the dangers to which its narcissistic particularity may lead it.

The Issue of Ethics

Humanistic nationalism would bring into play the moral and ethical realm. One of the things which we are witnessing today in the global politics is the absence of even a modicum of ethics and moral consideration. The Chanakkian and Machiavellian approach to power and political expediency seem to rule the political realm. The transcendence and openness I referred to above is the primary way of practising ethics in the ambit of politics in general and nationalism in particular. The “religious” character with which nationalism is vested could blinker the vision and call for allegiance of the people for violence, crimes and inhumanity. There will be no hesitation for ethnic cleansing to uphold the nation and its interests.

Conflicting Streams

Tagore was a thinker who foresaw the dangers of an immoral and parochial kind of nationalism. He was pained by the experience of the nations of the West and was deeply dismayed by the idolatry of nationalism and its consequences to humanity. Against the nationalist thought of the day, Tagore raised his voice of protest recalling the

greater ideals of humanity. His humanistic vision comes through in the lectures he delivered in the West and in Japan.

Even though from childhood I had been taught that idolatry of the nation is better than reverence for God and humanity, I believe that I have outgrown that teaching, and it is my conviction that my countrymen will truly gain their Indian by fighting against the education which teaches them that a country is greater than the ideals of humanity...¹⁶

Historically, the universalistic orientation Tagore called for, goes in the direction of one of the trends represented at the time of the struggle for national independence. The two trends of the time could be characterized broadly as particularistic and universalistic. The first trend represented by Arya Samaj sought to bring about national regeneration by purifying Hinduism and by ridding it off those elements which made it appear superstitious and idolatrous. This regeneration of the nation was to be effected with reference to its past – Vedas, Upanishads, etc. The basic attitude is that India does not need others, but can independently grow and flourish. This stream of thought found expression in various ways through the decades preceding the Independence and today is represented by the ideology of Hindutva. The second stream of nationalism was represented by the concerns for reform and regeneration of India. However, it was not opposed to other traditions and cultures. The spirit was that of encounter with the “other”. This stream of nationalism was represented by Brahmo Samaj.¹⁷

There is one point in common for both the streams – that is, both of them were *elitist* in character. None of them addressed the issue of social marginality and exclusion. And that leads us to the next consideration.

Nationalism and Social Equity

The test of the universalistic character of any nationalism will be its commitment to social equity. From a theoretical perspective we understand why even secular nationalism is not able to come to terms with this problem. As I mentioned earlier, secularism is a way to ensure the co-existence of the various groups subsumed under the umbrella of nation-state. Secularism believes that this is taken care of when the state takes a position of *neutrality* towards the various groups in the polity. For example, secular would be a state which does not promote

any religion to the disadvantage of others; or a state that would promote all religions equally favouring none of them in any special way.

But the point is that this way of considering secularism does not respond to the existing situation of inequalities. All that it is concerned about is the continuation of the situation without interrogating the inequalities among the groups. Neera Chandhoke draws a comparison with what happens in the market when it is promoted without consideration to the existing inequalities, and argues that

[A]n expression of formal equality, secularism is formally devoted to the management of inter-group relations. It is not concerned with the fact that some groups may be dying out for lack of attention, or decaying because they are forced to conform to practices that are not their own. But there is hardly any point of valorising secularism if the very existence of the group whose equality we want to ensure is a matter of some doubt. Secularism may be instituted, concretising as it does the principle of formal equality in the domain of religious affiliation, but it may not in the ultimate analysis have a constituency that this principle is supposed to regulate.

..[E]qual treatment of unequal groups reproduces inequality.¹⁸

Secularism may have a formal approach to equality, but *a substantive approach* to that issue is very crucial for universalistic and inclusive understanding of nationalism.

Inclusive Character

As it is, there is the general impression created that some people (the upper and middle classes) are nationalistic whereas others are not. In India, the tribal people are looked with suspicion and their national loyalty is being questioned. The homogenisation process, therefore, aims at ensuring their Hindu national identity. Similarly, the vast segment of the dalits and their call for equality has been spurned. There is, in the thought of religious nationalists one supreme value – the nation – on whose altar everything including the claim for equality should be sacrificed.

Against this background we realize the paramount importance of placing the attribute of “*inclusive*” for the humanistic nationalism. But if we look at the Indian Constitution, we will find how it provides for equality by ensuring that the marginal identities and groups are brought

under the purview of equality by providing for reservations. The pursuit of a nationalism along this spirit of equity would bring about greater cohesion and unity in the country. On the other hand, the absence of concern for social equity in religious nationalism makes it partisan and a programme of domination.

We need to guard ourselves against a fallacious argument in favour of "equality" which goes to strengthen the hold of the upper and middle classes over the marginal and excluded people and minority groups. The argument goes like this: in a secular state all the groups should be treated equally. The moment this is not observed, the state would be going against the principle of secularism. It is this kind of "secularism" which is demanded by religious nationalists. On the basis of this reasoning, the religious nationalists oppose the principle of reservation meant to overcome the existing structural inequities and the provisions to protect the legitimate interests of the minority. No wonder then that the Mandal Commission report calling for redressing the social inequity precipitated a serious crisis in Indian politics.

A Project of Freedom

To call for a nationalism inspired by the practice of substantive equality and the spirit of inclusivism is a call to turn nationalism into truly a project of freedom. Freedom is integral. A nation cannot be half-free as much as someone cannot be half-pregnant! Either all the people of a nation are free or a nation is not a free nation at all. If therefore, a section of the people are excluded from freedom and equality, what is being pursued in the name of nationalism is bondage for the whole nation. Nationalism becomes truly humanistic when it moves from exclusion to mutuality; from bondage of many to inter-dependence of all.

The inclusion we are talking about is not only cultural. Today it is important that the inclusion be understood also in economic terms. Religious nationalism, contrary to general impression, is very much at home with globalisation of economy. This is already an indication of the elitist character of this nationalism. Inclusion, therefore, would mean that the economic agenda be such that it includes the poor and the marginalized. The combine of religious nationalism with globalisation becomes doubly oppressive for the poor and the excluded groups. Humanistic nationalism as a project of freedom, therefore, would have also as its scope the development of an economy serving the marginal

groups and identities.

Encounter of Cultures and Religions

In humanistic nationalism, the religions and cultures do not become constituencies to be managed to arrive at cohesion and harmony in the society. The secular nationalism, while, acknowledging the plural culture and religious traditions, nevertheless is concerned about “managing” them so that they do not come into conflict. The humanistic nationalism instead would take a very positive view of plurality and consider the diversity of cultures and religions as a richness from which the whole nation benefits. In contrast to the homogenizing spirit of religious nationalism, and the individualistic spirit of secular nationalism, humanistic nationalism will be centred on the practice of pluralism and acceptance of difference.

The future of humanistic nationalism cannot be made to depend upon a formal recognition of secularism as endorsed by the Constitution. At a time when the Constitution itself is being challenged by religious nationalists, it would be unwise to rely exclusively on secularism. The principle of social equity which is so very necessary for the well-being of all the segments in a nation needs to be undergirded by new forces. In this connection I see the importance of *new social movements*.¹⁹ Dalit, tribal, feminist, and ecological movements highlight the situation of social inequality and economic exclusion. They take up issues which affect marginal and excluded groups. And precisely for this reason, they try to work in the direction of a substantive equality, and therefore bring a more integral, inclusive and humanistic approach to nationalism.

IV. Christianity and Humanistic Nationalism

What kind of response Christianity could give in the context of nationalism? Our concern here is not simply a historical one, namely to trace how Christianity has interacted with the surge of nationalism in the West and in other parts of the world. We are concerned here more directly about situations in which Christianity is numerically a minority as in the case of our country. The problem cannot be reduced to simply what contribution Christianity has made, for example, to the nationalist movement leading to Independence.²⁰ This is an interesting area of research. The question of relationship of Christianity to nationalism need not be restricted to this issue alone. There is the question

of nationalism also as an ideology.

The contemporary question we need to address is how could Christianity interact with the social, political and cultural processes of our society, and precisely in this particular configuration of context contribute to a more humanistic and integral understanding of nationalism. For this purpose we need to begin by broadening our perspectives.

Particularity and Universality

First of all, Christianity in its very core is a message of deep humanism. Therefore, to a movement like humanistic nationalism, Christianity can make a significant contribution. Secondly, Christianity is not simply projection of some vague ideal; it has in its very origin and development a strong concrete historical dimension. In other words, *particularity* is part of Christian self-understanding. That is why, nationalism implying particularity of language, region, culture, history could very well be understood within the Christian frame of thought.

But Christianity stands also for *universal openness* which embraces the whole of human family. Authentically lived Christianity is deeply rooted in the soil (nationalism) and at the same time transcends it precisely by its openness to others – cultures, religions, histories, etc. In this sense too Christianity cannot but be attuned to the spirit of humanistic nationalism which combines the particular and the universal. On the other hand, Christianity could never subscribe to a nationalism which becomes a narcissistic ideology.

Support to Secular Ideals

Christianity can and ought to support a secular approach to nationalism. Though it is a religion, authentic Christianity has more to do with secular ideals than the vision of a theocratic polity or religious nationalism. In fact, historically there has been a very interesting discussion on the inter-connection between Christianity and the secular. Some authors like Arend Theodor van Leeuwen support the position that the secular – at least in the West – is a contribution of Christianity.²¹ Be that as it may, what is important is that clear elements of secularity are to be found in the Christian Scriptures and tradition. Let me adduce here simply two such elements: In the Biblical tradition, the institution of Kingship was never divinised. That is to say, the secular reality was

considered in secular terms and not sacralized in such a way as to become itself a source of legitimation. Secondly, the whole doctrine of creation was oriented to the autonomy of temporal realities. The order of the world has its own inner dynamics and its trajectory which needs to be respected. They are not to be undermined and brought under the tutelage of a religious universe. The interpretation of the secular in terms of equality of all and not privileging of any is to be also found in the Scriptures. For example, we have some passages speaking of the equality before the law and the court – independent of the fact whether one belongs to one's own community or an “alien” not belonging to that particular community. “There will be one law for you, member of the community and the alien residents alike, a law binding your descendants for ever...” (Nb 15:15-16; see also Lv. 24:22).

Promotion of Pluralism

Christianity could contribute to humanistic nationalism by promoting the spirit of pluralism. The religious nationalism in its spirit is homogenizing. Humanistic and inclusive nationalism is one which respects and takes seriously the diversity and plurality in the nation. Recognition of pluralism and acting on that basis would bring peoples, cultures and religions into greater understanding. Authentic Christianity vibrates with diversity. The fact that the very conception of the divine mystery is something where plurality is to be found (the mystery of the Trinity) offers an important motivation and force to Christian engagement for the promotion of plurality at every realm of national life. Further, the Pentecost which depicts the situation of the unity of heart and mind among a plurality of peoples and cultures is a potent symbol for commitment to the unity of the nation in its rich diversity of regions, peoples, cultures and religions. An important means to realize this goal is to participate actively in the civil society. It offers the space for people to interact with each other, not only as individuals but as groups and as different identities. A healthy civil society marked by pluralism will ensure also authentic and humanistic nationalism. Christians by actively participating in civil society could also help to create an environment for the cultivation of the spirit of secularism, democracy and social equity.

Christianity and Struggle for Democracy

Like the contribution to the secular, the Christian response to nationalism should be in terms of activation of the struggle for democracy. I say this because, the reaction to the provocations by religious nationalists in the last couple of years, unfortunately, concentrated simply on *Christianity as a religious community* in confrontation with the Hindutva. We can understand the difficulties on the ground when provocations take place.²² However, we need to widen the perspective, being aware of the fact that apologetic kind of reactions only add fodder to religious nationalism which is out to look for “enemies” to combat and to thrive by conflicts. From a larger perspective, an appropriate response would be to ensure democracy and its benefits for all the people, specially for the downtrodden. For, a nation can grow and flourish only through democratic path which allows room for all the people and cultures freedom, power and participation.²³ These are issues common to the whole nation which Christians could take up at various levels and areas of public life.

Representing the Un-represented

For a fuller and integral life of the nation, all the groups and identities subsumed under it must be represented properly. It is for this reason the assertion of the subalterns – the tribals, dalits and others become an important contribution to nationalism. Therefore support to the cause of these subaltern groups may not be interpreted as anti-national. The espousal of the cause of the subaltern groups and identities is in the direction of a more complete and integral understanding of nation. The support to their cause could be specially in the area of culture. It could be in the area of, for example, constructing an alternative historiography which will not be characterised by exclusion. These are some of the avenues in which committed Christians could respond and thus contribute to a truly humanistic nationalism.

In the context of religious nationalism, Christian response needs to make its contribution to secularism and democracy in a more concrete and contextualized manner. We saw how the secular in a multi-religious and multi-cultural needs an interpretation and praxis that would go beyond a mere equi-distance of the states from all groups. The formal equality

of all needs to be based on a *substantive equality* which provides for the weaker groups in the nation. This again is something very much part of the Christian message. In fact, the entire Bible speaks insistently on the need of the whole community to take care of the underprivileged ones in a special way. In contemporary theology, this Biblical insight is expressed by the call to an “option for the poor”. When the “option for the poor” is politically and constitutionally expressed by the policy of reservation to the disadvantaged groups, it means attention to the culture and traditions of the smaller groups and identities. Here, Christians will find an echo of what they believe to be a deeply Christian message. Hence, by supporting the policy of reservation, what is being done is to strengthen the nation in its weaker spots. A nation can be healthy only when all its parts are sane.

Spirit of Collaboration

What ways and strategies Christianity could adopt for its contribution to integral nationalism? If the institutional or official Christianity were to intervene in the political field, it would be offending the secular principle, and could be a cause of gross misunderstanding in the society. What the institutional Church could do is to encourage committed Christians to involve themselves for a more holistic and integral nationalism. The most effective contribution to humanistic nationalism could come not so much from the institution, but from committed Christians in the broader society upholding in all areas of life in the nation certain universalistic ideals and goals. These Christians would serve as a force of inspiration to transform the polity into more humanistic and inclusive one. Lest all this should remain at the idealist level, there needs to be also concrete praxis and strategies to be adopted. In this regard, we may recall here what we said earlier about the importance of new social movements and their place in the development of humanistic nationalism. It appears to me that one important form of Christian commitment to humanistic nationalism is to *collaborate with* these movements which highlight the situation of the marginalized and the excluded. The strengthening of these movements is to strengthen the democratic and secular process as well as the practice of substantive equality.

All this calls for also a critical rethinking on the Christian engagement for the poor and the downtrodden. As it is, much of the Christian social involvement fails to make a general impact on the political and cultural processes because it is not done *with others*. As a result, the laudable commitment in favour of the downtrodden becomes object of suspicion. Questions are raised whether this is a commitment with a bait. Allowing the participation of others in the planning and execution of its social, medical and educational enterprises, will bring greater integration of the Christian community with the issues of the nation and the public life.

Dialectics of Integration and Prophesy

Finally, the Christian approach to nationalism is open to two different paths. One could interpret nationalism with rootedness (or so called inculcation) and integration as the chief points of reference. However, this rootedness needs to be at the same time in a dialectical relationship with the critical or the prophetic. An uncritical conformism neither helps the cause of nationalism, nor is an expression of Christian spirit. May be an illustration from China will help us in this question. In China, the question of Christianity and nationalism has become a very crucial issue. There is the so-called Underground Church and there is also the Patriotic Church.²⁴ The Patriotic Church which goes along with the flow of national history faces the problem of prophetism. It could be so conformist to the national agenda that it could forget that a humanistic nationalism calls for also critique and prophetic voice. On the other hand, the Underground Church lacks rootedness in the soil, and tends to be a reactionary force. We would wish that the Underground Church were a prophetic force, for example, when there were gross violation of human rights symbolized in the events of Tiananman square. But this did not happen. The case of China leads us to reflect how in minority situations, Christianity needs to constantly move ahead with a dialectics of integration and prophesy which itself is a contribution to humanistic nationalism.

Conclusion

Religious nationalism is spreading fast in several parts of the world. In each context there are specific reasons for the ascendancy of this kind of nationalism. It has brought about serious conflicts and violence; it is a permanent threat to harmony and peace. Nationalism creates

serious polarization in terms of insider/ outsider, we/they. Furthermore, it has dangerous homogenising tendency that does not allow for difference and pluralism. In the process, it co-opts or suppresses violently other identities. By essentializing culture and manipulating history, it turns itself into a domineering ideology. It functions by exploiting religious symbols, rites and myths.

On the other hand, secular nationalism is supposed to transcend the sphere of religion and religious identities. It is centred on a separation of religion and politics in its strict interpretation, and equi-distance of the state from religion in its more liberal version. It relies on the basic equality of all citizens. The crucial question is whether the secular nationalism could be a response to religious nationalism and can stem its tide.

While secular nationalism has its own points of strength, it seems to be inadequate to face up to the challenge thrown by religious nationalism. There is, in the first place, a general opinion that "secular" is a Western concept which is ill at ease in our context. The conception of equality implied in the understanding of secular is formal in nature. We need *a substantive conception of equality* which would take into account the incontestable fact of plurality of groups and identities, specially the vulnerable groups. Granting that this is possible within the frame of secular nationalism, we cannot, however, ignore the fact that the "secular" has become a highly debated question when it comes to interpretation. As a result, strangely though, the religious nationalists themselves could claim to be true secularists and brand others as "pseudo-secularists". Finally, the secular nationalism does not allow enough room for the universalistic ideals of religion to operate in the stream of the society, because of its public/private distinction. Added to it is the fact that the secular approach to religions is often one of "drain inspector's report" (Gandhi). I mean to say that the secular approach is preoccupied with the negativities of religion so much that it is not able to tap the humanistic message religions have to offer.

We need to move in the direction of a humanistic nationalism which would be inclusive. This type of nationalism will benefit from the contribution secular nationalism has to offer. In addition to that, it will create the space for the religious insights to play their humanizing role

in the society. Humanistic nationalism suggests the particularity of nation and fuses it with the universalistic and humanistic vision. This is very important for the encounter of peoples and cultures. Within the nation itself, humanistic nationalism will see to it that no group or people is neglected or left out. It will be particularly attentive to the marginalized and vulnerable groups by setting in operation social equity.

Christianity can contribute to strengthen humanistic nationalism. On the one hand, it is attuned to the spirit of secularism by recognizing the autonomy of temporal realities which would not allow any unwarranted religious interference. By supporting the cause of the marginal and subaltern groups like the dalits and tribals, Christianity would actually contribute to an inclusive nationalism. For this to happen, Christianity should make its contribution to the vulnerable groups *with others* and not in isolation. Further, the Christian support to humanistic nationalism should be characterised by a dialectic between rootedness and prophecy. This will avoid, on the one hand, the impression of alienness to the nation, and uncritical conformism, on the other. Finally, one of the avenues open for Christian involvement is the collaboration with new social movements which go in the direction of secularity and social equity. These movements try to bring ethics in action and transcend the narrow boundaries of caste and creed. Finally, Christian support to humanistic nationalism would be in the form of fostering pluralism which is very crucial today for harmonious and just inter-relationship among the groups and identities subsumed under the nation.

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Foot Notes

¹ This article does not go neither into the history of nationalism which is very wide, nor into the various theories on the emergence of nationalism. For these, cf. E.J. Hobsbawm., *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1992 (second edition); Anthony D. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism*, Duckworth, London, 1983; Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*,

Verso, London 1983; Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Basic Blackwell, Oxford 1983.

² Cf. Mark Juergensmeyer, *Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State*. Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1993; cf. also Ninian Smart, *Religion and Nationalism*, Centre for Indian and Inter-Religious Studies, Rome 1994.

³ Cf. Ninian Smart, *op.cit.* p.12.

⁴ Cf. Wim Beuken – Karl-Josef Kuschel (eds), Religion as a Source of Violence?, *Concilium* 1997/4.

⁵ Rene Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, Baltimore – London, 1976. According to the author, many religions in their rituals represent “surrogate victim” or scapegoat on which the violence is symbolically transferred, and hence violence would be in the very nature of the sacred. The ritually performed “sacred violence” at the micro level is supposed to safeguard the society from large-scale macro violence.

⁶ Cf. Maria Pilar Aquino – Dietmar Mieth (eds), The Return of the Just War, *Concilium* 2001/2.

⁷ Several important studies have appeared in recent times. Let me refer here a few, by way of example. Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India*, Viking, Delhi, 1996; Walter K. Anderson, and D. Damle Shridar, *The Brotherhood in Saffron: The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Hindu Revivalism*, Vistar Publications, Delhi, 1987. Thomas Blom, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi 1999.

⁸ Thomas Blom Hansen, *Op.cit.* p. 63.

⁹ K.N. Panikkar, “Alternative Historiographies: Changing Paradigms of Power”, key-note address delivered at the National Conference on : *Towards Alternative Historiographies*, organized by the Department of Christian Studies, University of Madras, April 2001. (publication shortly).

¹⁰ K.N. Panikkar, *ibid.*

¹¹ Cf. Rajeev Bhargava, (ed.), *Secularism and its Critics*, Oxford University Press, Delhi 1998.

¹² Cf. Peter Beyer, *Religion and Globalisation*, Sage Publications, London-New Delhi, 1997.

¹³ T.K. Oommen, (ed.), *Citizenship and National Identity – From Colonialism to Globalisation*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1997.

¹⁴ T.K. Oommen, *Op.cit.* 69ff.

¹⁵ Zygmunt Baumann, "State and Nation", in his *Thinking Sociologically*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1995, p.171.

¹⁶ Rabindranath Tagore, *Nationalism*, Rupa and Co, Calcutta, 1992 (original 1917), pp. 83-84.

¹⁷ Charles R. Heimaath, *Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform*, Princeton, New Jersey 1964.

¹⁸ Neera Chandhoke, *Beyond Secularism. The Rights of Religious Minorities*, Oxford University Press, Delhi 1999, pp. 89-90.

¹⁹ Cf. Felix Wilfred, "Religion Face to Face with Globalisation", in Felix Wilfred – Jon Sobrino (eds), *Globalisation and its Victims. Concilium* 2001/5 (shortly to appear).

²⁰ There are some researches and studies on this, specially from the Protestant side. For example, see Arthur Jeyakumar, *Christians and the National Movement*, Punthi Pusthak, Calcutta, 1999; Elizabeth Susan Alexander, *The Attitude of British Protestant Missionaries Towards Nationalism in India*, Konark Publishers, Delhi, 1994 (M.Phil. dissertation presented to the University of Madras).

²¹ Arend Theodor van Leeuwen, *Christianity in World History: The Meeting of the Faiths of East and West*, New York, 1964.

²² Felix Wilfred, *Asian Dreams and Christian Hope*, ISPCK, Delhi, 2000.

²³ Cf. Manoranjan Mohanty, "Theorising Democracy" (Endowment Lecture delivered at the Department of Christian Studies, University of Madras, April, 17, 2001).

²⁴ John B. Zhang Shijiang, *Toward a Wider Reconciliation. A Cultural-Theological Reflection on the Division within the Church in China*, East Asian Pastoral Institute, Manila, 1997.

Religion and Nationalism

John B. Chettimattam

The R.S.S. chief K. S. Sudarsan, is constantly repeating wherever he goes that Christians and Muslims cannot be authentic Indians unless they break all foreign connection and become Hindu-Christians and Hindu-Muslims. This appeal to patriotism and nationalism has been a challenge to religions down the centuries in the West, while it is rather ironic for Indians to take such a line of thinking since tolerance for all religions has been the hallmark of the East. Its negative side, namely opposition to all kinds of foreign domination and colonialism has great validity, but its positive message is rather shallow and dangerous, and quite untypical of our Indian religious tradition.

The Geography of Human Thinking

First of all narrow nationalism and broad-minded internationalism both are mostly a matter of geography. When the hoards from northern Europe came south and settled in the narrow strip of the Athenian peninsula, they were so constricted by the geographical terrain between two oceans criss-crossed by hills and dales, that their thinking was very much determined by the small piece of land apportioned to each one. 'Being' was actually standing up for one's own property rights, 'chora', luck was one's portion of land, and 'dike' justice, was the fence one put around one's property. Similarly mountains and deep rivers have divided Europe into such impenetrable pockets that even today it is divided into good many nations with differing languages and cultures and radically different ways of thinking, the Germans, the Polish, the Swiss, the Belgians, the Flemish, the Spaniards, the Italians, the Albanians, the Slovaks, the Macedonians and most funny of all the little country of Luxemburg. Palestine is such a narrow strip of land between the Mediterranean sea and the deep gorge of the Jordan river

that the Jews who claimed it as their God-given land can never get out of their ghetto mentality and the never resolvable hatred of their cousins the Arab-Muslims. For these peoples nationalism is a necessity mechanism for basic survival. On the other hand, the nationalist China covers such a vast portion of Asia, more or less a flat plain from north to south and west to east, that its nationalism down the centuries knew only the boundaries of heaven above, humanity below and propriety in front. Similarly in India the mountains and rivers were never barriers, but rather paths for the free flow of humanity through the Khaiber Pass to the Indo-Gangetic plain and from there over the Deccan Plateau to the South and through the various rivers and the seacoasts to the farthest corners of our land. That is why through different rulers tried to cut it up into tiny pockets of culture it always remained one country represented by the culture of the great epics. It never felt the need to protect itself against any race or culture or religion. Race after race entered this country down the centuries and felt at home with unity in diversity of its traditions. Hence for us to jump into the narrow nationalisms of the Europeans or of anyone else will be a betrayal of the very geography of our Mother Land.

Religions against Foreign Domination

If we look at the origins of religions there are two attitudes and approaches clearly discernible. There is no doubt that every religion was at one time or another exploited by temporal rulers for extending their political power. Under Asoka and other Buddhist kings Buddhism was the religion of India for over a thousand years, and when Hindu kings came into power, Buddhism was virtually wiped out of India its birth place. Still these Eastern religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism and Shintoism appeared as variations of the same culture, with very little stress on ideological differences, so that the same person could be Hindu and Buddhist, or Confucian, Taoist and Shintoist at the same time welcoming every new positive element without caring much from where it came. But the major religions of the Middle East, Judaism, Christianity and Islam rose actually as protest movements against the foreign cultures. Thus the Jewish idea of God cannot be understood without its sociological background as a semi-nomadic nation wandering up the Euphrates-Tigris valley then coming down the Palestinian coast to Egypt and then again back into Palestine, looking up to Yahweh as its

tribal Deity. Often dominated by foreign powers like the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Persians and finally the Romans, they conceived their God as a kind of super-monarch, like one of those conquering kings who entered into a benevolent treaty with the subjugated. Their absolute loyalty to Yahweh and strict monotheism made them feel special and to look down on other peoples like the Romans and the Babylonians with their many gods as inferior. They claimed to be the "Chosen People" and appealed to a special revelation from God through Moses and the Prophets. The Jewish Tora, the special law given by Yahweh through Moses could be understood only by those initiated into Judaism through circumcision. Still they thought of their Law as binding on all humans and wishfully looked forward to the day when the Messiah would come and establish Israel's rule over all the peoples.

Christianity also was born under the domination of the culture of the Romans. Its social character was determined by the people's desire for social reform throwing away the foreign elements got from the Babylonians and the Romans. Then there was the divine personality of Jesus of Nazareth who with his cry "My God, my God why hast thou abandoned me," changed the whole sociology of a vassal people to the attitude of a child complaining to its loving Father. He was acclaimed as the Messiah by his disciples and the generality of the people. Another factor was the homeless and wandering life style of the Cynics adopted by Christ and his disciples. Romans looked with suspicion on any peoples' movement, even purely religious, as a threat to their government. Herod executed John the Baptist for fear of a Roman intervention, and Jesus was crucified for the same reason. Jesus himself preached love for one's enemies in the place of the popular hatred of the Romans and the instigation of the Zealots for revolt against the foreign power. He called on the people to turn the accusing finger against themselves, to repent over their own sins, and to replace hatred with love. Still, Christianity also was communicated to people as a doctrine about the salvation accomplished by the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus, made available only to those who believed in him and were baptized in his name. So the disciples of Jesus were inspired to go to all parts of the world, to preach the Gospel and the imminent second coming of Christ as the final judge. When it spread into the Graeco-Roman world and the Roman emperors embraced it and made it the state religion, it

insisted that it had to be imposed on all humanity. Since it was firmly believed that “there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved.” (Acts. 4:12), it became militant and those in power tried to impose it on everyone. Though it is often said that it was the blood of martyrs that became the seed of Christians, the real fact is that Christianity spread by the sword of emperors like Constantine, Theodosius and Charlemagne who found in the unity of religion the strength of their empire.

Similarly exclusivist and extremely nationalist from its birth was Islam. It was born under the shadow of the Byzantine empire to the north, the Abyssinian kingdom to the West and the Persian domination to the East. It replaced the blood relationship of the Arab tribes with the faith-relationship of Islam. When Mohamed was expelled from Mecca he went to Medina, took it by storm and returned to his birth place and proclaimed the religion of obedient faith in the Qur'an, the heavenly book revealed to Mohamed by angel Gabriel. This was the exclusive possession of Islam, which, however, had to be imposed on all human beings as the Law of God. Each of these religions claimed an exclusive revelation from God, intelligible only to its initiates, but relevant and obligatory to all human beings. Each of them based its authority on a book, the Pentateuch and Prophets for the Jews, the New Testament for Christians and the Qur'an for Muslims.

One of the basic reasons for this exclusivism and nationalism of these three religions is the Greek philosophy and its conception of truth, which they adopted for interpreting their faith. For them truth was conformity of one's ideas with the thing out there. The religious problem was one's bafflement with the phenomena out there characterized by finitude, flux and multiplicity, which could not provide the ultimate explanation for their own existence. They point to the one, infinite and immutable Supreme Being. Though these finite beings of our experience come from that One, by its side these are not. So looking for the nature of that Supreme Being they had to rely on God's own self-disclosure through revelation. There could not be partial revelations of God since He has no parts. There could not be any alternates to Him either, since there could not be two absolutes. So each one's vision of God had to be exclusive of every other idea of God. This quarrel about the idea of

the one really real Being had already divided the major religions of the world against each other when logic and metaphysics emerged in the world. The only possible approaches to other religions were exclusivism, inclusivism, or pluralism. One could say that one's position was correct and everybody else wrong; or admit that others also had some elements of truth and all of them were included in one's own position; or agree that they are all parallel paths to the same Deity like many roads leading to the same summit or many rivers flowing into the same ocean. This is the theological basis of religious nationalism. As Masau Abe states when the West declared God the Supreme Being it got by that itself the divine sanction to go out and subjugate the whole world. The Spanish King dispatching Cabral with seventeen ships to the East tells him: Go out and defeat the enemies of God and conquer the world for Christ. This conquest was the basic ideal of the colonialist missionary work!

The Oriental Approach to the Problem

The Orientals find themselves in a quandary when they approach the problem of religious nationalism. When the Western religions try to impose their unique philosophical perspectives on them, they cannot fight back without falling into the same wrong philosophical supposition. Their philosophical problematic is not centred in a God out there or up there, but in man himself, in the suffering of human beings. So Truth is not something out there to be grasped by objective investigation, but rather something to be realized at the core of one's own self-existence, the Self of one's own self. That is why Buddha rejected all the sixty two metaphysical systems of his times as irrelevant to the religious inquiry and found the answer in the *catvari aryasatyani*, the Four Noble Truths: All life is suffering; suffering arises out of craving; this craving can be prevented; one should have recourse to the eightfold path. Ultimately the phenomenal world of experience is empty, and emptiness is the fullness. Similarly Hinduism looking for the root cause of threefold suffering saw its substance in Prakrti and its three gunas, and the really Real in Purusha, the pure light shining by itself. As Sankaracharya explains in the introduction to his Brahmasutra Bhashya caught between the two worlds of subject and object, self and non-self we are in the wrong habit of imposing the Self on the non-self and vice versa and this superimposition of one on the other is the source of all our suffering. The way out is *Brahmajijnasa* an inquiry into Brahman

as the Self of one's own self. Here God has to be seen as *janmadyasya yatah*, the One from whom the origin, sustenance and dissolution of all things. God cannot be seen by direct perception as a lotus flower in one's hand nor indirectly as a cause from its effect, like fire from smoke, but only non-indirectly (*aparokshatvat*) as one sees oneself. Here Scripture is our guide not as a direct statement in simple do's and don'ts, but as the statement in human words of the Rishi who had a realization of God, just to help us to attain by ourselves the same realization.

Christian Orientalism

Some of the Oriental Christians too had an anti-nationalist and truly experiential understanding of religion. Though Christianity once it went out of Palestine into the Roman empire was very much taken over by the Greek philosophy of Plato and Aristotle and dominated by their problematic of bafflement at the phenomena of nature, there was a group of Christians who lived outside the Roman territory and could in no way accept Greek philosophy as an adequate tool to explain their faith. Constantly persecuted and tossed between Romans to the West and Persians to the East they could not claim either country as their own. They produced a number of eminent thinkers in the third and fourth centuries AD including Aphrahat, the Persian Sage, Ephrem, the Syrian, Narsai, Isaac of Ninive and others. While Byzantine and Roman theology was formulated in the heyday of Byzantine political power, the Persian Church made its theology in the midst of intense persecution when thousands of Christians were killed by the Sassanid rulers. As Ignatius of Antioch wrote only when you are at the point of martyrdom and ready to lay your life on the line in total surrender to God you have a correct vision of God. The starting point of Aphrahat was that God is so transcendent and incomprehensible that it is impossible to grasp him by any kind of projections of human thinking like being, truth and consciousness. But by his reason and will and his dominion over the rest creation man knows that he is made in the image and likeness of God. So he can think of God as his ultimate end and goal and project God as his loving Father, saviour and add other titles without in any way denying that transcendence. Similarly Jesus Christ foretold by the Prophets as the Messiah, the Son of God, the Second Adam is the foundation for faith.

The Oriental Traditions

The Oriental traditions in Christianity had a difficult time in maintaining their identity and freedom over against the Roman tradition which tended to impose itself on the rest of the world. Christianity itself was universal, without any distinction of East and West, between Jew and Gentile. In fact, Gregory of Naziansus in the fifth century speaking against Arian heretics who appealed to nationalistic pride in maintaining their special views regarding the nature of Christ, praises the Apostles for having risen above their Palestinian culture. Peter and Paul embraced an international kind of culture. Thomas left his Judaic and Palestinian background, went to far away India and whole-heartedly embraced its culture. Founded by the Apostles in each country Christianity embraced its religious history and tradition, and on its basis developed its own theological thinking, form of worship, style of spirituality and ecclesial discipline. These historical individualities of the different churches was an integral part of the ecclesial patrimony which later legislation could only recognize and not deny. But in the later Middle Ages with the re-discovery of Plato and Aristotle theology developed in the West as an academic subject treated in the universities along with other subjects of science and humanities. Then arose the tendency to treat the highly systematized theology, spirituality and discipline of the West as a universal norm for the whole Church reducing what was special to the Oriental ecclesial traditions as mere liturgical ceremonies, popular piety or at best irrational mysticism characteristic of the whole Orient.

In fact the distinction of many rites and ecclesial traditions in the same Church became a sort of embarrassment to Roman authorities who looked at uniformity as the shortcut to ecclesial unity. The Council of Florence, which dealt with the reunion of the Byzantine Church with Rome, avoided the word 'rite' and substituted it with the more specific terms like 'mos' custom, and 'consuetudo' tradition, when referring to the peculiar mode of living of Byzantines, Armenians, Copts, Syrians, and Chaldeans. The Council of Trent used the word 'rite' only in the strict sense of liturgical ceremonies. But Clement VIII in his *Instructio super ritibus Graecorum*, dated August 30, 1 595 comprehends under the word the entire liturgical and canonical disciplines of the Greeks. Benedict XIV applies the term 'ritus' to the five great liturgical traditions of the Church. But this created some difficulty for canonists

providing norms for transition from one rite to another since one had to take into consideration besides ascription to one or other of the five rites, also entry into a determinate Christian community of the Oriental Church, dependence on a determinate hierarchy and observance of its discipline. So Pius IX went back to the Council of Trent restricting 'ritus' to signify exclusively the rubrics and liturgical traditions*. Leo XIII in his letter *Orientalium Dignitas* dated 30 November, 1894 accepts the distinction of the five rites and refers to liturgy as the fundamental traditions that tie the diverse ecclesiastical communities, while taking the "riti secundarii" in the sense of ecclesial communities *sui juris*.

The Latin Code of 1917 can.98 speaks of in # 1 "inter varios catholicos ritus ad illum quis pertinet, cuius ceremoniis baptizatus fuit" (among the various Catholic rites one belongs to the one with whose ceremonies he was baptized); and decreed in # 2 "nemini licet sine venia Apostolicae sedis ad alium ritum transire" (No one can pass to another rite without the permission of the Apostolic see) But canonist Michaelis commenting on it stated that in Can.98 "rite" designated substantially the determinate church, which is governed by special laws and customs according to ancient traditions, not only regarding the form of the liturgy, but also the constitution of the hierarchy, government and discipline". In *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* of Vatican II it is stated that the rite in the strict sense means only liturgical matters. But actually in dealing with the particular churches it speaks of the whole spiritual tradition. The present Oriental Code restores the ancient idea of rite: Can.28 # 1 "A rite is the liturgical, theological, spiritual and disciplinary patrimony, culture and circumstances of history of a distinct people, by which its own manner of living the faith is manifested in each Church *sui juris*". But the codifiers of Church Law seems to have taken particular care to see that the Orientals too in most cases followed the same provisions as the Latins, except in the liturgical prescriptions which follow a truly Spirit-centred Oriental perspective. Today at least the principle is recognized that the Roman theology, spirituality and discipline are not the only valid ones in the world, and that theological perspectives and their elaboration in spirituality and disciplines one belongs to.

* Letter "Non sine gravissimo" Feb.24, 1870, *Fontes CIC*, Vol. III, p.555

Nationalism and the Positive Sciences

When we leave the field of philosophy and come to positive sciences, the situation regarding nationalism is entirely different. Regarding metaphysics, the science of reality as such, there is little scope for progress, except to transmit to posterity the wisdom of the ancients. Hence each nation tended to preserve intact its traditional line of philosophical thinking. What differentiate metaphysics are the different questions one starts with and the specific philosophical method one uses. That is why Greeks and Indians believed in the immutability of philosophical principles. One could only transmit that wisdom from generation to generation, with only minor modifications in its formulation. When one comes to empirical sciences, on the other hand, there is no scope for such differences as an Indian Chemistry or European physics. Besides, there is an indefinite possibility of new information leading to revision of old theories. When India discovered the value of zero in mathematics and introduced the decimal system it revolutionized mathematics for the whole world. When around 1000 A.D. the Indian mathematician Bhaskara discovered the possibility of continuous movement, within fifty years it was passed on to the Arabs who in turn passed on to the Europeans. As the anthropologist L. White says while in India it remained a philosophical principle, in Europe it led to the discovery of the fly-wheel and the pump. Hence simply going back to Vedic mathematics in the name of our ancient tradition will only impoverish our knowledge. Similarly history has to be guided by facts; mixing it up with legends and myths and giving all the same value will make history unreliable. Though history is not merely accumulation of data concerning past events, but for their proper interpretation, one cannot rewrite history by wishful thinking.

Religion and the Sciences

This supranational relevance of science has acquired special importance for religion today. Focus of religion is no longer God, but rather God's will for humans and their life on earth as responsible stewards of creation. It is more a question of translating religious experience into details of daily life with the help of the empirical sciences. Man's task is not merely to escape from this world of ignorance, misery

and suffering, but rather to escape with the world making it hospitable to all God's children. Hence the focus of religion today are the empirical sciences like history, psychology and sociology. First of all it is through the science of history that humans can know themselves, from the discovery of fire, through the invention of the wheel and development of the bow and arrow, to the realization that they have a goal higher than all the material things and that God their source and final goal has spoken in the past through various events and personalities. Even a professed Advaitin cannot deny the historical existence of his great grand father, lest he should be denying his own personal existence and all his search for the One-alone-without-a-second would not make any sense. To our common history belong ancient civilizations like that of the Egyptians who studied the stars, named the constellations and developed a calendar, of the Babylonians who tried to foretell future events by studying the stars, and of the Chinese who developed their own system of writing and mathematics and made advances in astronomy, chemistry and medicine. Confucius, Buddha, Christ, and Mohammed with their distinctive religious messages and claims all belong to the same history. Equally important for religion is the science of psychology that shows that man by his very nature tends to an ultimate goal of happiness, in relation to which whatever comes as the object of his desire has to be judged good or bad, right or wrong, and that the decisions he makes determines his future. It is the sciences of anthropology and sociology that show that individuals are not just islands but part of the great continent of humanity, which has a common origin, face the same existential riddles to which religions provide answers, and that through the divine gift of faith one can move towards the final goal of fellowship with God.

Of course, different nations have made distinct contributions to different sciences, and one can say that even sciences are to a certain extent culturally conditioned. Still, their contributions and their cultural nuances once presented become the common property of all humans. That is why even religions and their unique Scriptures are subject to the scientific method, the unique way of thinking about problems and solving them. Even when a religion is based on the unique and incommunicable experience of individuals, scientific method can come in and address

what the basic problem was, how the religious hypothesis addresses it, how the relevant facts support the hypothesis, how it is interpreted and what conclusions could be drawn from it. This approach enables everyone to critically examine the credentials of each religion. Thus with the application of the scientific method to Christian Scriptures it is found that most of the conclusions that were supposed to be "proved" by texts picked up often without sufficient attention to their contexts and original linguistic meaning do not actually say what they were supposed to say. Today with the help of the scientific method we know better than ever the origins of the Christian religion and the specific scope of each of the twentyseven books of the New Testament. They were not intended as history in the strict sense of what happened, nor did they attempt an ideological statement of the Christian message. They only tried to apply the witness of Apostles concerning their experience of Jesus risen from the dead and to actualize his Gospel in given contexts. Often they were liturgical celebrations of the passion, death and resurrection of Christ for the salvation of humanity.

Of course the conclusions of the scientific investigations historical, psychological, sociological and anthropological do not make religion, but only make religious faith itself rational. Religion is essentially man's unconditional surrender to God, the ultimate meaning of his life. It is an act of his will, recognizing God as his ultimate Good. This reminds us of Augustine's statement in his Confessions: "O God you created us for you and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you." Faith is not the conclusion of a syllogism. But rational investigation including history, psychology, sociology and other sciences do make our faith rational, and enables one to give the reason for his hope, when that hope is challenged by others.

Conclusion

Nationalism and patriotism have only limited scope when we deal with religion. Its role is rather negative, to question those who try to impose their faith on us. Religion is not one of those hand-me-downs simply passed from generation to generation. Whatever one learns from one's parents through education one has to question and relearn by oneself. Faith and morality are not syllogistic conclusions either. They

imply a direct relation with one's final end. Faith is the free gift of God to all his children and it is nourished by the story of God's dealings with humanity down the centuries. The different religions that appeared at crucial moments in human history tell us the story of how God spoke to humanity at different moments. To hang on to the past of one's nation as an absolute will be suicidal since one will be trapped in the mistakes of the past bound to defend everything with the slogan: "Right or wrong, it is my Mother Land!" One has to be critical of one's own culture since by its very definition a culture is valid only for the values that are transmitted through it.

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Statement of the Seminar on Religion and Nationalism

Jeevadharma the international journal of religious interpretation called together on April 2 and 3, 2001, a meeting of scholars to discuss the implication of our loyalty to and pride in our national, religious and cultural traditions of the different religions for the Indian people today. We the participants particularly focused attention on the relation between religion and civility, and our duty to build up a democratic civil society. Particularly important is a democratic functioning within religion. All know that submission to any totalitarian power secular or sacred of a single religion or ethnic group even in the name of nationalism or patriotism can be real slavery. Every religion by its very nature tends to go beyond all national boundaries and embrace all human beings as brothers and sisters.

2. There is no doubt that after the cold-war era and the break up of the Soviet Utopia, for the first time in history, global politics is both multi-polar and multi-civilizational, and that modernization is clearly distinct from Westernization. So in defining our ageold cultural identity we have to discern carefully every colonialist move even when it comes under the garb of religion lest we should bring in through the backdoor what we throw out through the front door. Here globalization in spite of its economic inevitability and obvious advantages has also its dangers and disadvantages even when it comes in the form of religious fads and fashions. Even within our nation in defining the religious culture what is important is to look whose religion is taken as the model and pattern of the national culture. Often the religion of an elite minority is imposed on all as the paragon of religious culture. What has to be emphasized is the religious concerns of the common man in a truly democratic perspective.

3. There is no doubt that Indian Christians are truly inculcated in the religious tradition of India. But the real question is whether they unwittingly identify themselves with the culture of the dominating classes rather than get into the liberating spirit of Indian Scriptures, and identify themselves with the aspirations and concerns of the millions suppressed in the name of caste and class. How Christian faith itself affects the daily life and attitudes of people in their relationship with generality of people is not very clear.

4. One cannot in this context ignore the secular and pluralistic foundations of our nation. Even against the background of the communal clashes of 1946-48 the founders of our Republic chose the ideals of secularism and pluralism. Our tradition does not distinguish the sacred and the secular, nor find any opposition between philosophy and religion. But this democratic ideal of "secularism" does not fully respond to national reality. Unless one tries to do better justice to the disadvantaged and underprivileged the ideology of secularism will remain inadequate.

5. The recent use of nationalism by leaders of the Hindutva movement rather smacks of the Western type of nationalism which divided various countries and peoples against each other with the motto: "Cujus regio, ejus religio". This goes counter to the spirit of our nation which welcomed people from all countries and cultures to make India their own country.

6. Conclusion: The call to nationalism should be seen not as a negative challenge but rather as an opportunity to bring all people of India to see the underlying religion of the Mother Land that sees God as a loving Mother rather than as a stern father imposing his will on all. It is from that divine maternal womb whence all do emerge. It is that loving maternal care that keeps all safe and secure and to that divine bosom to which all will return. Without in any way denying the unique identity of each faith, Indian nationalism provides an aesthetic continuum in which all can live and work together as brothers and sisters.

PART - II

RELIGION AND CULTURE

Scope and Breadth of the Seminar on Religion and Culture

Thomas Srampickal

This seminar, I believe, is a very significant event and a highly commendable venture. First of all, because it is **a joint effort** of Mahatma Gandhi University and Jeevadhara Theology Centre. This joint effort itself is a living example for the constructive collaboration that can be fostered between religion and culture, the Theology Centre broadly representing religion and the University similarly representing culture.

There are also other reasons for considering this seminar a significant one. This is **a national seminar**, bringing together scholars from different parts of the country, belonging to different religious traditions and cultural backgrounds. **W. Churchill** is said to have depicted the **Russia** of those days as “**a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma**”. If we described **India** in a similar fashion, I think it would be something like “**diversity manifested in variety permeated by complexity and sustained by plurality**”. Beyond any doubt, Indian society is pluralistic in cultural traditions and religious faiths. Discussion and sharing about the interaction and relationship of religion and culture within such a pluralistic setting should be much more enriching and productive than if it were done against the background of a uniform religion and culture. This pluralistic perspective I feel would be a salient feature of this seminar.

Then the very **theme of this seminar, ‘Religion and Culture’**, is a very relevant one. As we know, Religion and Culture are as new as they are ancient. They are two topics capable of instantaneously making our **hearts throb** because we are all emotionally so much attached to them. We are emotionally so attached because, I think, they affect and shape us to the core.

Several psychologists would say that Religion is a universal motivating factor, perhaps even more universal and motivating than sex is. Sex, as we know, characterises the whole person, colours all his activities and serves as a motive for a multiplicity of actions and reactions. So is religion. I just make a citation from **Gordon Allport**, the well known (though late) American Personality psychologist who complimented **William James** who had written the book *Varieties of Religious Experiences* which still remains a classic in the field of Psychology of Religion. Allport says: "Writing in the Victorian age William James could bring himself to devote barely two pages to the role of sex in human life ... Yet no taboos held him back from directing the torrent of his genius into the *Varieties of Religious Experiences*. On religion he spoke freely and with unexcelled brilliance. Today, by contrast, psychologists write with the frankness of Freud or Kinsey on the sexual passions of mankind, but blush and grow silent when the religious passions come into view... even though religion, like sex, is an almost universal interest of the human race" (*The Individual and His Religion*, 1973, p.1). The above lines bear witness to the significance of religion in the sight of two eminent psychologists, one writing at the turn of the 20th century and the other decades later.

Religion is dear to man because it responds to his **need for security, thirst for the Transcendent** but above all to his **quest for meaning**. As we know, man is possessed of an "**appetite for meaning**". All our intellectual operations in fact press for coherence, unity and meaning. We are restless until we gain it at least in a reasonable measure.

Empirical sciences do give us information, knowledge and certainty to some extent. Inflated claims of science already stand challenged by post-modernism. Any way, sciences do not take us to ultimate questions or give adequate meaning. It is the task of **philosophy and religion** to ask questions of ultimate significance and try to provide adequate meaning. And here religion goes beyond philosophy in as far as it puts man in warm personal relationship with the Absolute. **Hence, religion is a master sentiment, comprising reason and faith, feeling and meaning.**

Culture is an equally encompassing and engaging reality. It is the transformation of the physical nature and the human society itself by the **permeation of the creative urge and potential of the human spirit.** As such it can affect everything human: eating habits, dress, dwelling place, work-style, values, art, literature, religious expressions, etc.

Religion and culture are not two parallel realities but interdependent and mutually influencing ones. Thus we have religious sculpture, religious dance, inculcation in religion etc. These are legitimate and laudable, but rather peripheral. We need to accentuate today a deeper convergence point of religion and culture.

We also speak of Hindu culture, Christian culture, Islamic culture, etc., with legitimacy and even certain pride and complacency. But one-sided emphasis of such specific cultures can lead to dangerous consequences, contradicting and betraying the very meaning of culture. **And we are already witnessing enough of such dangerous signals, both from the part of culture and that of religion.**

This makes it all the more imperative for us to seek and actualize deeper convergence points between religion and culture.

Religion as devotion to the Absolute cannot but demand devotion to co-human beings. "He who says that he loves God but hates his brother is a liar" says St. John (1 Jn.4:20). In fact, every known religion advocates love, concern and compassion for others. All religions seem to have (at least) **3 basic dimensions or constitutive elements**, namely, **creed, cult and code.** In other words, doctrines to be held, mode of worship and rule of life. It is encouraging to note that while religions differ among themselves in doctrine and worship, **they substantially converge in the basic rule of life;** in giving to their followers a **basic norm of human solidarity, mutual assistance and support**, as contained in the so-called **Golden Rule.**

Examples from some major religions:

Buddhism	- Hurt not others with that which pains yourself (Udanavarga 5.18)
Christianity	- Treat others as you would like them to treat you (Luke 6:31)

Hinduism	- This is the sum of duty: do naught to others which, if done to you, would cause you pain (Mahabharata, 5.1517)
Islam	- No one of you is a believer until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself (Traditions)

This is indeed a wonderful unifying point of all religions!

As far as culture is concerned, 2 aspects may be distinguished: **content and form** (eidos and ethos in Greek) of culture. Content refers to the visible, external, institutional aspects and achievements of a culture like art, literature, etc. Form means its inner spirit, the ennobling quality and character of a culture. **It refers especially to the ideals and values cherished and promoted by a culture in its various projects and activities.** The ethos of a genuine culture should be noble and elevating as it should be the **expression of the positive and creative in man.** “**Culture is what makes life more bearable for another**” is quite true.

The **deeper convergence point** of religion and culture then appears to be **their humanizing potential:** the disposition and resources to respect the dignity and worth of every human person and care for his/her growth and well-being. A true index of the quality and progress of a culture is the measure of freedom and protection enjoyed by its weaker sections like the poor, illiterates, Dalits, children, women, etc., because it is a manifestation of the nobility and maturity of the people to respect the dignity inherent in every person without the trimmings of power, caste, wealth or gender.

Let religion and culture strive together to actualise their Humanizing Potential and may this Seminar give an added impetus and incentive towards that goal.....

Counter Culture and Containment Strategy in Pre-Modern India

Rajan Gurukkal

A counter culture is a parallel cultural practice with a relatively autonomous space of its own. Formally and structurally it is counterpoised against what has been traditional and hegemonic in the society. In that limited sense a counter culture in any society, is an articulated protest against the established. In a historical society a counter culture is made out on the basis of these parameters that are ascertainable from the vestiges and survivals of the past. The present paper discusses counter cultures and their subsequent historical role as strategies of containment in the different social systems of pre-modern India. As it is a very vast and multi-faceted topic, anything more than a rough outline is virtually impossible in a short paper like this. The paper attempts to make a historical overview of the whole processes in the perspective of a social formation according to which a society is conceived as a structure of relations emanating from a host coexisting and interacting forms of production. The initial part of the paper focuses on the early Indian social formation that provided the material milieu for counter cultural manifestations involving elements of dissent and protest. The second part of the paper is concerned with the central features of counter cultures in the medieval social formation, often made out as an Indian variant of feudalism. The last part of the paper deals with the chief characteristics of counter cultures in the changing material milieu of the immediate pre-modern India. An ideological critique of the potential elements of social protest what is embedded in counter cultures is appended to each part as to highlight how they subsequently turned out to be strategies of containment in the given social formation.¹

Despite our commendable progress in archaeological researches, the Harappan society, the earliest of all evolved societies of the country's past, continues to be eluding in terms of its structure and system of relation. What succeeded the Harappan was the Vedic tribal pastoral society rich in cultural texts of oral compositions expressing a basically simple social order which precluded the formation of a counter culture within. A complex society of relatively developed material culture and evolved institutional formation began to take shape in the later Vedic period when the pastoral tribes moved on from the north-west to the east towards the Ganges valley.

By the first half of the first millennium B.C. the Gangetic region got studded by a large number of agrarian settlements *janapadas* and their marketing centres, *nagaras*. Both archaeology and the later Vedic texts suggest that the *Janapadas* and *nagaras* were many, unevenly developed and steadily spreading across the basin. The painted grey ware and iron artefacts are the major archaeological indices to the range of diffusion, of the material culture in the period. Iron ploughshares and allied implements were central to contemporary forces of production which would presuppose the existence of some surplus development of specialisation and formation of functionally specific social groups. This would further presuppose the beginnings of the involvement of non-kin labour in the process of production, inversely suggesting the progressive disintegration of kinship base. However, households depending mainly on family labour remained the nuclei of production that were organised around the patriarchal headmen called *grihapatis* though the labour of servile groups called *dasas* and *bhritakas* generally referred to as *sudras* was also used². An important social consequence of the proliferation of agrarian settlements in the period was the augmentation of the *dasabhritaka* class recruited from among the local clansmen. This servile class constituted the most oppressed and exploited in the social order which was yet to acquire many of its institutional manifestations. It was a complex structure within which primitive agriculture, animal husbandry, craft-production, plough agriculture and full time trade coexisted and interacted. Though the superiority of plough agriculture in terms of productivity was tacitly recognised, as a potential form of production it was yet to secure its political power structure and ideology to dominate. The political level of *janapadas* was only nearing a state

structure with systematic mechanisms for surplus appropriation, the common practice being protestations and predatory exactions. An important social-political contradiction of the period was the competitive claim of surplus by both the *Kshatriyas* and *brahmanas*, the former as the protectors and the latter as priests who guaranteed better productivity through sacrificial rites. The cultivating and trading *Vaisya-gahapatis* had thus to meet the demands of these competitors. Naturally the *Vaisyagahapatis* constituted an interrupted and disturbed group yearning for a new political structure and religious sanction. *Kshatriyas* were also an equally agitated group aspiring autonomy from the ritual constraint of brahmanism.

A spate of new ideologies characterised the Gangetic valley in eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar around the sixth century B.C., negating and questioning the established socio-political nations and patterns of life. Historians have ably illustrated the material milieu of the birth of these new ideologies and ways of life by examining the social effects of the multifarious facets of contemporary material culture, brahmanical rituals, *varna* system and political practice³. We would argue that all these new thoughts were articulated protests against the diverse and mutually antagonistic elements each one of them resented in the social formation which was a combination of conflicting forms of subsistence. *They involved the resentments of the tribal pastoral primitive agriculturists to advanced farming communities, rapid urban developments, trade and markets, migrations, sacrificial rituals and so on.* They also involved the resentments of the oppressed and exploited in the system of contemporary social relations. Much more than all these, they represented the aspirations of the *Vaisyas* and *Kshatriyas*. *Despite the endless nuances below the surface, all of them shared a master code of renunciation in differing degrees of austerity.*

We would examine only Jainism and Buddhism, the two prominent streams of contemporary thoughts, which were perhaps the most effective counter cultures and potential strategies of containment.

Both Jainism and Buddhism were counter cultures based on renunciation as distinguished from those which resorted to asceticism of extreme kind. The ascetics opt out from society to a totally autonomous space while the renouncers of the Jain and Buddhist orders

never cast themselves away to a totally independent space of existence. They renounce the society and transcend its structural limitations to remain depended on the society itself for their sustenance. But this return to society is to be in defiance of the structural restrictions of the society and act as a source of protest. Both the Jains and Buddhists opted out from the structural restrictions of the society such as the *varna* system, the variety of tabus, property relations and so on, but subsisted on the social resources as mendicants. Such an existence was a protest by itself and constituted a counter culture potentially inconsistent with the hegemonic culture⁴. This is clearly demonstrated through the ways of life they prescribed and institutions devised. In fact, it is the demonstration of an alternative system of living in which the contradictions of the established society cease to exist. The institution of *Sangha*, for instance, demonstrated a parallel way of life based on material simplicity, lack of desire, belief in non-violence, sense of equality and ideological social relationships. Transcending the Varna restrictions on social relations and functions involving subjection of the *dasa*, *bhratake* sections of the Sudra-Varna to servile status, the Sanghas at once acted as a protest against the social contradictions and a way resolving them.

The protest of the Jain and Buddhist orders against the brahmanical beliefs and rituals involving animal slaughter in large numbers, is explicit in the Pali texts. Their disapproval of the *varna* system is also well attested by the heterodox literature namely the canonical texts. As counter cultures and sources of protest their social role is apparent, but behind this exists a rather mysterious role of 'containment strategy' which is essentially interpretive. It could be an inadvertant role in the sense that neither Mahavira nor the Buddha had been consciously manipulating⁵ the renunciatory mode of social protest as a strategy of containment. It is this role of defusing the possible real protest of the oppressed and pre-empting a radical social change, that we identify as containment strategy which is part of the manipulation by the political unconscious of the dominant mode of production.

As part of the historical process these counter cultures found themselves restructured about the beginning centuries of the Christian era which witnessed the dissolution of the early Indian social formation. Now even in rhetoric they were quite far from being the antagonistic collective discourses of the *teased and frustrated*. Their dialectical

transformation was so fundamental that the transformed ideas and institutions made little difference from the established. The *Swetambara* and *Mahayana* factions of Jainism and Buddhism respectively, represented not the counter cultural voice but the dominant class voice of an augmenting peasant society structured by the dominance of agrarian relations. A monastery of the period was a wealthy institution with a large number of inmates and a variety of functionaries organised into a structure of assymmetrical relations. It was now the seat of an entirely different cult and mode of worship centering around the *Thirthankaras* or *Bodhisatvas* amid their *yakshas* and *yakshis*, never to have anything to do with the original Jainism and Buddhism. A new religious sensibility rooted in the cult of individual devotion and self surrender was slowly characterising contemporary Jain and Buddhist beliefs. The cult of *bhakti* in which a devotee was like a servant or attendant and the deity, a sovereign, took shape during this period as a symbolic religious manifestation of the nature of actual social relations.

The restructured counter cultures emitting the passions and values of a different system of social relations, point to the emergence of anew social formation out of the contradiction aggravated by the external dynamic like predatory marches, migrations, decline of craft-production trade and urban life and the internal dynamic like the proliferation of *jatis*, *varna-sankara*, and so on that generated a social crisis around the third century A.D. It has been argued that the descriptions of the Kali age in epic and puranic literature of the period signify the production crisis forboding the new social formation⁶. The material conditions of the immediate post-crisis period seem to have necessitated certain new institutional devices for organising production in a society of confused relations. The crystallisation of the *jati* system, hereditary occupations and the popularity of land grants especially to brahmans were some such institutional developments. Though the practice of land grants was started with the alienation of villages to monasteries, the brahman gotras soon dominated as the beneficiaries of the practice. Agrarian expansion through brahman headed villages, superimposition of superior ownership right over communal lands, transformation of tribal and clansmen settlements into settlements of agrarian workers, multiplication of arts and crafts in the villages, and by and large the development of a closed economy characterised the new social formation. It was a

hierarchical system of social relations corresponding to the structure of land-rights implying varying degrees of entitled-merit to the produce. Largely as a system in which the relationship between a class of non-cultivating land owners and the various categories of primary producers was fundamental, the social formation has been characterised as an Indian variant of feudalism. Since the mode of production involved the subjection of primary producers to immobility and bonded labour and the appropriation of surplus through extra-economic coercion, the concept of obligation, duty, allegiance and non-expectancy of reward for services was extremely important. The development of the cult of *bhakti* during the period makes much sense in this context of a peculiar social relations based on ties of dependence and sense of loyalty ascending to the top of hierarchy.

The ideology of *bhakti* and the *doctrine of karma* as propounded in the *Gita* constituted the most powerfully articulated behavioural text⁷ for achieving coherence in a social system of contradictory relations. The greatest contradiction in the social formation was the ideological mechanism of appropriation that divested the primary producers of their produce by a non-producing class. The ideology of *bhakti* and *karma* gloss over the contradiction and legitimises the relations of domination by substituting truth with myths. What is really significant about the concept of *bhakti* as promulgated in the *Gita*, is not how it mirrors the relation between people and their conditions of existence but the way people lived the relation between themselves and their real conditions of existence, the importance of the doctrine of *karma* is that it is an invention of the collective mind to explain the plight of the oppressed to themselves by shutting their eyes before the real cause of their miserable existence. It is not in *Gita* alone that we see the articulation of the *bhakti* ideology. A variety of puranic and other compositions like *Bhagavata*, *Dharmmottara* and *Harivamsa* also contain elaborate texts of the *bhakti* discourse. It took umpteen forms of cultic manifestation all over the country through a complex process of syncretism, as the feudalisation of society was in progress since the fourth century A.D. In the Gangetic heartland and central India it took the form of *Bhagavata-narayana* cult to begin with and later to be transformed into *Narayana-Vishnu* cult. Towards the lower Ganges valley the cult of *Narayana-Vasudeva* and *Sangharshana* became popular while in the peripheral

region the cult of Vishnu as a syncretic form of *Vasudeva-Sangharshana* cults gained currency. As the feudalisation process acquired greater momentum in the subcontinent, the numerous deities and cults of anterior social formation got assimilated and subordinated as part of Vishnu-bhakti through the concept of *avatara*. Thriving on the huge agrarian surplus of the hinterland societies, the cult gave rise to a large number of structural temples and agamic worship across the land.

This initial phase of the bhakti movement was never a counter culture in the sense that it instead of representing the antagonistic class voice, produced the hegemonic voice of the relation of social domination. However, in a broader perspective of ideology as a strategy of containment, the movement was certainly part of that, not in the sense that it contained the dissent and protest in the social formation, but as it reinforced and reproduced the system by hiding the truth behind the social conditions. What is significant is that it did not emerge as a counter culture, but as a leavening traditional element reified in the collective mind as response to the changing material milieu. In fact it penetrated into the counter cultures and transformed them into structures of conformity, as already noted in the case of the heterodox religions.

The *Alwar* and *Nayanamar* phase of the *bhakti* movement has often been characterised as counter cultural in its making as well as purport. This is not true; nor borne out by history. In fact it was largely a temple movement popularising the temples as seats of deities, Vishnu or Siva, and expanding through the brahman settlements from Kanchi to Kanyakumari along with the process of agrarian colonisation and temple building activity.⁸ The *Alwars* and *Nayanamars* were hymnists who considered themselves as servants of Vishnu and Siva respectively as worshipped in temples. A hymnist preferred to be known as *tondar adip-podi*, the dust at the feet of Vishnu. The crux of what they celebrated was the ultimate rescue at the feet of god and the cult of absolute surrender that made the devotees equal in the eyes of god who was the final refuge. It is obviously an ideology repressing the contradictions underlying contemporary social relations and expressing the helplessness of the collective mind before the painful truth of oppression and exploitation imposed by the social formation. Without any difference in terms of the principal message, both the *Alwars* and *Nayanamars* propagated the ideology of the landed class by sanctifying

self surrender and servility that formed the basis of contemporary relations of production and appropriation. Interestingly most of the *Alwars* and *Nayanamars* hailed from the landed class, precluding the presence of antagonistic class consciousness to characterise the movement with elements of protest. But certainly there were a few hymnists hailing from among the down-trodden class as exemplified by Tiruppan *Alwar* and Nandanar. It is extremely important to note that both these hymnists had not only to suffer a lot but also to succumb to a 'forced physical transportation to heaven' for being lower castes⁹. Tiruppan *Alwar* hailing from among the poor *pana* folk had no brahmanical sanction to go near a temple for chanting his hymns and for attempting to do so he had to suffer a variety of afflictions from the brahmans who finally got him inside the temple where the deity sent him to heaven. Similarly Nandanar who was a *paraiya* by birth had been beaten up and wounded many times before being eventually taken to the temple only to go to heaven at the instance of his deity. These instances of the miraculous exit of a *pana* and *paraiya* purvey insights into the character of the bhakti movement in the context of a society of caste restrictions. It is true that the *Alwar* and *Nayanamar* had a sort of egalitarian structure within the respective sect transcending caste rulers. But that hardly did matter since the followers were almost entirely of the upper castes. However, there is an implicit element of dissent in that as opposed to the caste society, though the movement was extremely rigid and sectarian in outlook. This sectarian rigidity never allowed the movement to develop into an articulated source of social protest rather than being subsumed by the dominant ideology.

Compared to the master code of bhakti formulated in the puranas and the Gita, the south Indian *bhakti* expressed in the devotional songs of *Nalayira Divyaprabandham*, *Tevaram*, *Tiruvacakam* and *Tirukkovaiyiar* is simplified more emotional and personal. Naturally it was much more appealing also. The most striking difference is its shift from the abstraction of the puranas and the Gita to objectification and personalisation. In the hymns of *Alwars* and *Nayanamars* Vishnu or Siva is conceived as the personal and local deity, consecrated in a temple. The God is projected as the refuge of the destitutes in their hymns and not as the creator and protector of *varna* and *dharma*. Unlike the Gita that was addressed to a society yet to be systematised in terms of

relations and functions, the Tamil *bhakti* hymns were addressed to a society relatively more stabilised and requiring no notion of absolute power as the sanction behind the norms of social coherence. This was, in fact, the main reason for its popularity, across the wide variety of social segments ranging from the brahmanas and the ruling aristocracy to the destitutes like *pāna* and *paraiya*. Such an extensive dissemination was an essential functional requirement of contemporary relations of production and mechanisms of appropriation that were regulated and controlled through the temple. It is the internal dynamic of the social system that generates the ideologies for the maintenance and reproduction of the system, which matters here. We see a king like Kulasekhara and a poor *Pāna* like Tiruppan among the *Alwars* and a king like Cheraman Perumal and a *paraiya* like Nandanar among the Nayanamars, suggesting the popularity of the movement. In that sense of its wide ranging appeal, the movement was apparently counter cultural running up against the restrictions of a caste society. But beneath the surface it was a containment strategy that absorbed the impulses of dissent rising from the contradictory relations of the society. Much more than the presence of Tiruppan or Nandanar in the sects, the fabrications about their mysterious disappearance from the temple, worked in the minds of the people as a source of consolation. That was in fact, the central role of *bhakti* as imposed by the social structure.

It was the variety of Saiva monastic orders, particularly in the peninsula, that began to throw up counter cultures from about the seventh century A.D. *Kapalikas* and *Pasupatas* were the two important sects which advocated a free society of sexual licence and alcoholism totally antagonistic to the morals of brahmanism. They denied all the Sastraic and puranic injunctions to practise tantricism. It was the *Kalamukha* sect belonging to the *Pasupata* system that gained currency in the peninsula as a protest against the hegemony of brahmanism. The anti-brahmanical attitude of these sects signifies the protest of the subordinated non-brahman land holders against the stabilising relations of domination through brahmanical ideas and institutions. Obviously they represent the resentments of the erstwhile power groups which were divested of power in the wake of the proliferation of *brahmadevas* and *devadanas* as centres of advanced farming. However, the accomplishment of a parallel society bereft of brahmanical practices

and beliefs, emptied the society outside, of its drive for a collective dissent against the relations of brahmanical domination. Being exotic in their practices, these sects failed to secure any popular following and soon got successfully encountered by assimilating rival sects by brahmanas. The *Dasanami-Sanyasis* who were Saiva ascetics ranked foremost among such remodelled monastic orders. They imbibed many of the practices of the heterodox Sanghas such as celibacy, austerity and subsistence alms. The monasteries of *Dasanami Sanyasis* were called *mathas* and by about the ninth century several of them sprang up all over the peripheries of the subcontinent. But soon the *mathas* were richly endowed with like the temples and the chief of each *matha* became a source of authority playing a significant role in contemporary power structure. The protest element embedded in the earlier Saiva sects, waned as the monastic system advanced in terms of internal organisation and possession of property in the relatively autonomous space of its own and finally became a parallel structure of hierarchical relations conforming to the actual social set up. Corresponding to this process of development in the Saiva monastic orders, several Vaishnava sects belonging to the wider category of the *Pancaratra-cult* also had a similar course of development from the pre-monastic phase of protest to the monastic phase of conformity. What emerges is a recurring sequence of protest and containment across social formations with conditions of exploitation and oppression, exposing the collective mind that continuously denies truth for an invented truth of its own kind.

Remarkably different from all the previous Saiva monastic orders, a new Saiva sect, namely the Virasaiva emerged in Karnataka around the twelfth century A.D., as a vigorous counter culture questioning the priestly supremacy of the brahmans, their sacrificial rituals, other rites and the institution of caste. Tradition says that Basava, the founder of the sect was a Saiva brahmana who opted out from the family and caste on the eve of his *upanayana* in protest of the meaningless rites, rituals and restrictions of caste. Whatever is the historicity of the tradition about his childhood reaction, the movement led by him reflects the nature of contemporary social mores and the impulses of dissent immanent in the minds of the exploited. He vehemently criticised the rituals involving animal slaughter, caste based social ostracism and the subjection of women. Several *mathas* of the Virasaivas were established

by him in Karnataka and in the peripheries of Andhra, Tamilnadu and Maharashtra, as the institutional bases of the movement, demonstrating the structure of a parallel society transcending caste rules, brahmanical rituals and the subordination of women. Obviously Basava takes his cue from Jainism which maintained a stronghold in Karnataka for a long period by being fundamentally restructured as to suit the changing material milieu of societies transforming into advanced agriculture. The *Yapaniya Sangha* of the Jain religion, which served as the institutional and ideological forces of social organisation in communities transforming from pastoral primitive agriculture into plough agriculture, shows how radical this restructuring was. There was a lot of freedom for the women folk under the *Yapaniya* discourse of Jainism, as distinguished from the miserable plight of women in the growing caste society across the brahman settlements. By the twelfth century the increased land grants to brahmans and the creation of agraharas overshadowed the influence of the *Yapaniya Sangha* and established brahmanical domination. It was in this background that the *Virasaiva* movement secured relevance as an articulation of the antagonistic class voice through the individual consciousness of Basava not as an individual ideological practice, but as part of the collective class discourse. .

As in the case of any other counter cultures of historical societies, the protest and the eventual demonstration of a parallel society devoid of contradictions outside, made the *Virasaiva mathas* ultimately a strategy of containment that deferred change of any radical dimension. Further, the movement had the same fate of being reformulated in course of time, accommodating all that it originally set out to question. Now there are numerous castes among the *Virasivas* and obnoxious ritual practices and beliefs as part of their life, albeit without much change in the anti-brahmanical attitude.

Asceticism as a counter culture persisted on across the land over the centuries, sometimes as individual practices and at times as a group activity among those who congregated around certain individual ascetics. Renouncers opting out to lead a life of ideological closure in a system of their own, also transcend the chronological schema. Though they all do have a relation with the structural impositions of the given social formation, in terms of the role they play in the society, each case is not interpretive in the sense that it is not part of a wider social response.

Most of them transmitted the message of a conciliatory ethic and performed an ameliorative function in times of tension, either through a discourse of pacifism or dedication of themselves to suffering. Even when some of them registered, strong protest against the social contradictions, it could only lead to the making of a parallel society whose insistence on equality never applied to the world outside them and could only defer a radical social change or enfeeble the need for it. Totally different from the continuing ascetic tradition of the early *Snatakas* and *Parivrajakas* or the renouncers like Ramanuja or Jnaneswara, the last phase of the *bhakti* movement in the immediate pre-modern India produced a few saints of the Santa tradition who organised socio-religious protest of significant nature which deserves a special mention as a separate section.

It was towards the middle of the second millennium that the *bhakti* movement of the Santa tradition became prominent as a protest against social ills, religious obscurantism and complex ritualism. In terms of social formation, it was a transitional phase of numerous developments at the levels of the process of production and of the process of the social appropriation of the produce. A relatively more advanced technology both at the level of subsistence production and craft production organised on the basis of personal dependence and extra-economic bond involving exploitation of labour characterised the material process of production. A complex structure of agrarian relations centering around a variety of tenurial categories of military obligations, administrative responsibilities, sacerdotal privileges and so on all with several intermediaries, placed over the large group of artisans and craftsmen besides the diverse sections of primary producers, characterised the material process of the social appropriation of the produce. Increasing monetarisation, trade, urban developments, commutation of rent in cash, emergence of a wage earning class, multiplication of arts and crafts besides the presence of a strong state system and an overarching cultural plurality were other important features. The ever growing rigidity of the caste system cutting across the religious democritations worsened the conditions of oppression and exploitation of the lowlier social orders. Both brahmanism and Islam were replete with reified notions of the self and God, leaving the poor and illiterate in the dark about the underlying conditions of their miserable

existence. Even the illusionary solace through a refuge in God was denied to them in the process of theological reification. The socio-religious protest of the *Saints* of the *Santa* tradition was directed against a social situation of such sufferings and tensions.

Kabir ranks foremost among the makers of the *Santa* tradition that can well be made out as a counter culture protesting against the evil effects of institutionalised belief systems.¹⁰ He began his activities as a disciple of Ramananda who was a ruthless critic of brahmanical obscurantism and casteism, which he demonstrated by accepting people as disciples on considerations beyond caste and religion. Tradition says that Kabir received instructions from a Sufi saint also. Born as a non-Muslim and brought up as a Muslim, Kabir upheld the *Santa* tradition of non-conformity and condemned the brahman *pandits* and *mullas* who according to him were obscurantists taking pride in textual discourses. What made Kabir outstanding among the saints of the *Santa* tradition were his rebellious fervour, use of the dialect of non-literate masses and life of abject poverty. The directness of his appeal and the experience oriented instructions could move the people and convince them about the futility of rituals and meaninglessness of textual discourses. He was earnest and vigorous in his message and vindictive towards the brahmans who perpetuated the most unjust social evils like untouchability. He denounced idolatory, polytheism, the concept of incarnation, asceticism, austerity, worship in temples or mosques and so on. In several verses he condemned the caste system and the practice of untouchability. He exemplified himself as an exploited and oppressed man who instructively lived the relation between the oppressed and his conditions of real existence.

Kabir embodied the social anger and demonstrated it vociferously through his verses of the antagonistic voice of the teased and frustrated. He appeared in the streets and public places where people gathered and addressed them in the dialect of their own, often holding a burning stick symbolic of the furious collective mind. He never opted out from the society of sufferings in which he was born, but continued to bear them all along his life as an ostracised weaver in abject poverty and misery. So in fact, there was no instituted form of counter culture-device for him to demonstrate an alternative to the ill-conducted society. He did not seem to have allowed any disciples to congregate around

him either. Thus going beyond the usual sectarian limitations that distanced the sect from the suffering world outside, Kabir as an ordinary householder remained a real protest rather than an absentee source of protest which generally exhausted the drive for a radical change. Even then the protest hardly got impersonalised to develop as a collective upsurge, which was perhaps a historical limitation of all protests in pre-modern social formations. The central reason for this is probably the personalisation of the whole process of dissent, protest and rejection by himself rather than socialisation. He was impatient of social contradictions and religious obscurantism and raged like a wind of rebelliousness while he asked the people to be patient, truthful and nonviolent. What ultimately resulted was the dissemination of a conciliatory ethic of truth and love harmonising contradictory social relations of people through the ideal of 'all as equal in the eyes of God'.¹² It was a *strategy of containment*, however inadvertent it was.

To conclude, this is not to deny the progressive role played by the counter cultures in historical societies and to reduce them into a rigid frame of social protest and containment. We all know that historical developments hardly follow a strict pattern in any pure form¹². But it is also true that our mind is so constituted as to be structurally incapable of conceiving anything deeply except in terms of sequences¹³. A seriously articulated item of knowledge about the past is therefore the result of observations through a schematic instrument. So we would argue that the sequence of protest and containment as outlined here is an imperative to a serious understanding of the counter cultural trends in the past. Counter cultures across premodern social formations though emerged emitting antagonistic class voice anticipating change in the mode of production, also involved the dialectical representation of the collective political unconscious yearning for total social coherence and solidarity. Hence the subsequent role of strategies of containment in protest movements of pre-modern societies which articulated their protests through religious terms and sought what they protested to be resolved again in religious terms, is a natural concomitant.

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Footnotes

1. The concept of containment strategy is developed in Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness* (London, 1962). For an elaboration of the approach posting ideology in terms of strategies of containment, whether intellectual or formal, see discussions in Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (London, rpt. 1986) pp. 53-4: 210ff.
2. See the discussions on the problem in Romila Thapar, *From Lineage to State* (Delhi, 1984) pp.38ff.
3. D.D. Kosambi, Introduction to the Study of Indian History (Bombay, 1956). Also R.S. Sharma, *Material Culture and Social Formations in Ancient India* (New Delhi, 1983) pp. 117ff
4. See how the problem has been argued out in Romila Thapar, "Asceticism: The Making of a Counter Culture", in *Ancient Indian Social History: Some Interpretations* (New Delhi, 1978).
5. This has been discussed in Romila Thapar, "Ethics, Religion and Social Protest in the First Millennium B.C. in Northern India", in S.C. Malik, *Dissent, Protest and Reform in Indian Civilization* (Simla, 1977) pp.115ff. Also her "Dissent and Protest in the Early Indian Tradition". *Studies in History* Vol.1. No.2 (New Delhi, 1979).
6. The concept of Kali has been interpreted in the context of the presaging crisis of the feudal social formation in R.S. Sharma, "The Kali Age : A Period of Social Crisis", in S.N. Mukherjee ed. *History and Thought: Essays in Honour of A. L Basham* (Calcutta, 1982) pp.186ff. Also B.N.S.. Yadava, "The Accounts of the Kali Age and the Social Transition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages", *Indian Historical Review*, Vol. V. Nos. 1-2. pp.3,1ff.
7. See the elaborate treatment of Gita in D.D. Hosarnbi, *Myth and Reality* (Bombay, 1962). pp.1,ff.
8. This has been ably argued out in M.G.S. Narayanan and Kesavan Veluthat, "Bhakti Movement in South India", in S.C. Malik, ed. Op.cit. (Rev. ed. Simla, 1980).
9. *Ibid.*
10. Baidyanath Sarswati. "Notes on Kabir: A non-literate Intellectual", in S.C. Malik, ed. Op. cit.- (Simla, 1977)pp. 167ff.
11. It is the undeniable force of the dominant ideology that becomes important here as the central ideological closure of the historical imposition peculiar to the given social formation. See the relevant concepts in N.Abercrombie et.al., ed. *The Dominant Ideology Thesis* (London, 1980). Also in Goran Thorborn, *The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology* (London, 1980). Specifically on the role of ideology and its importance there is a relevant discussion in Althusser, *For Marx* (London, 1977) pp.231ff.
12. See the discussions in Perry Anderson, in the Tracks of Historical Materialism (London, 1983) pp.43ff. Also Nicos Populatzas, *Political Power and Social Classes* (London, 1973) pp.13ff.
13. See discussions in Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York, 1975) pp.216-20, 267ff.

Culture, Religion and the State in India: Some Theoretical and Political Dilemmas

Sarah Joseph

An issue which is of great political significance today concerns the way in which the relationship between culture, religion and state is conceptualized. A number of different conceptualizations are competing for acceptance today in the political realm. In this paper I argue that these different conceptualizations reflect different positions on two primary issues, a) how culture and religion are defined and the relationship between them is understood, and b) how we can understand the relationships among the diverse cultural religious groups in the society and between these groups and the state. I will try and analyze some of the conceptualizations which are currently in circulation, arguing that such theories frame the way in which the issue is understood and the kind of resolutions which are advocated. An essentially totalising and organic notion of the cultural community has dominated much of the discourse about culture and religion in India but the shifting political strategies of religious groups may lead them to sometimes assert the unity of culture and religion, and sometimes their separateness. At the same time the issue of what should constitute the shared national political culture of the state is also a matter of serious confrontation today. To disentangle these different issues should be a first step towards finding resolutions to some of the problems which they raise.

Culture and Religion

Culture today is often used as a catch-all explanation for a wide range of social phenomena. It is often held that understanding the principles of the culture of a society or group can be the key to understanding the behaviour and attitudes of members of the group. For instance, the economic success of certain countries, their

innovativeness and openness to new ideas, may be attributed to their culture. So may be the status of women, religiosity, or a strong work ethic. Such generalizations are often made on flimsy grounds in popular discourse though academics also sometimes indulge in wide and thinly supported generalizations. Behind such generalizations lies a conceptualization of societies as held together by their culture and shared values. This is a concept which originated in colonial anthropology but which has now become part of the common sense of contemporary societies even if it might be repudiated by anthropologists now.

In the modern period expertise on different aspects of social life has been claimed by different social sciences. Culture formed the more or less exclusive subject matter of anthropology right through the nineteenth and part of the twentieth century. It was anthropologists who studied the different societies encountered by western powers during the period of colonial expansion and who recorded the different ways of life and customs of different peoples. The tendency among nineteenth century cultural anthropologists, especially of the Boasian variety, was to assume organic connections between the beliefs and practices of a cultural community and to put forward a totalising notion of culture and community. In the case of these 'primitive' communities it would have been considered inappropriate to try and isolate their religious beliefs and rituals from the culture as a whole. The uniqueness of different cultures was asserted and members of the culture were considered to be the privileged interpreters of the culture. Possible conflicts and contradictions within a culture and power differences between different societies were played down. As has often been remarked, Boasian cultural anthropology drew inspiration from German Romantic thought. Romantic thought in Germany maintained that the organic human community was the repository of language, values and meaning and it formed a unique entity which was suffused with its culture. As such, cultures should not be subjected to piecemeal changes or the community itself would be disrupted. Although anthropologists today would claim that they have moved beyond such assumptions about cultural communities this concept is proving very resilient not only in anthropology but also in other social sciences and it plays a part in contemporary political discourses such as the discourse about multiculturalism, or the secularism discourse in India, which work with

the notion of distinct and holistic cultural communities. The identity politics which has been appropriated by certain groups in India today is also hospitable to an organic and totalising notion of cultural communities. Identity politics bases itself on the belief that the unique traditions and practices of a community are constitutive of the sense of self and identity of members and of their perceptions about the world and therefore claims on states for recognition of their collective right to preserve their culture and identity can be justified. The notion of a multicultural state embodies such conceptualizations.

Different identifying features of particular cultures may be selected as characteristic of particular groups. It could be language, or social organization, or ethnicity , or a combination of different factors though one or other is often considered primary. There is a long tradition in India, dating to colonial times if not before, of considering religion to be the primary marker of cultural difference. By equating religion with culture all the practices of the group, whether they are related to food habits, or dress, or the rituals of daily life, or systems of property ownership, could be seen as aspects of both culture and religion. Since the notion of cultural rights has now acquired some international acceptance, immigrant groups in different countries or religious groups in our own society have appropriated the language of rights and may claim the right to pursue their distinctive customs to help preserve their culture and religion and their distinctiveness as a community.

Sometimes cultural groups may resort to essentialist definitions of their cultural identity to adopt nativist positions. They may identify the core of the culture with some past historical period, or with particular texts, or languages. It is therefore worth noting that German Romantic thinkers like Herder did not resort to such arguments. In Herders own writings respect for humanism and universal Enlightenment values existed in tension with more essentialist positions which denied such values. But this tension is absent in many subsequent appropriations of his ideas. For instance, essentialism formed a part of Orientalist thinking about countries like India. In this conception Indian culture was described as Hindu culture and the essence of Hindu culture was associated with ancient texts, language and even race. Historians of modern India have commented on how processes of enumeration and mapping initiated by the colonial state contributed to identity formation

during the nineteenth century. The self-perceptions of religious groups was influenced by Orientalist notions regarding the bounded nature of cultural communities. Hinduism emerged as a definite category and attempts were made to 'reform' it and organize it. Muslim leaders also began to project Islam as separate to Hinduism. Both perceptions fed into nationalism.

Essentialism and cultural relativism easily generate the view that communities reproduce themselves by preserving their cultural traditions and adapting only incrementally to changing circumstances. The continuity of the culture, it would be maintained, require preserving the core elements of the culture. Such perspectives leave little for a critical understanding of either culture or religion. Essentialist views about cultures often rely on functionalist arguments. Functionalist arguments work with a simplified model of cultural communities as organically integrated so that change in any one part would affect other aspects of community life. Any or all the beliefs and practices of a community could be considered functional for its reproduction. It would follow that any changes brought about except by adaptation, might endanger the continued existence of the community and its ability to reproduce itself over time. At different times features like racial purity, shared language, or symbolic practices like the veil or turban, have been considered important for the reproduction of communities. Such perspectives make it difficult, if not impossible, to understand the complex and sometimes dislocated relationships which might exist between classes and sections of a community as also the kind of negotiations and mediations which might have regulated relationships between different communities over time. They also tend to encourage defensive attitudes in intercommunity relations.

The issue of how to evaluate and assess cultural values and practices has been a contentious one in India. The Romantic view was that different cultures embodied different rationalities and therefore they should not be judged by standards of rationality which are grounded in alien cultures. Herder, for instance, historicised the notion of reason, arguing that it could only be expressed in and through the history of different peoples and could only be fully understood through its concrete expressions. To interpret cultural practices one should first assume the coherence and rationality of a culture and try to understand its

practices within that framework. The debate about the use of 'internal' versus 'external and objective' standards of evaluation of cultural practices is familiar to us in India. It was there in the debate about how to understand the significance of sati, and it is central to the debate about the role of caste and the most appropriate methods of dealing with discrimination and exploitation. It has also surfaced in the view that alien and objectivist standards like human rights should not be used to evaluate Indian culture. Here it is not the possible political manipulation of human rights arguments but its alien nature which is highlighted. It is unfortunate that such arguments encourage only two responses - uncritical endorsement on the one hand or outright rejection on the other.

Culture, Religion and State in India

It was mentioned above that the Indological view tended to equate culture and religion and perceived India as a society composed of many separate cultural-religious communities. For the colonial rulers, this meant that India was not, and could never be, a nation. The equation of culture and religion influenced official policies and administrative practice during the colonial period and it can still be found embodied in aspects of official discourse. For instance, it may be found embodied in many rules and procedures of institutions like the police even today. Over time, a public sphere and civil society developed in India. The desired principles of the public sphere were expressed by the British in terms of liberal and Utilitarian values familiar to them. These included the concept of equal citizenship and equal civil and political rights. Liberal values were presented as universally valid by nineteenth century liberal thinkers like J. S. Mill although evolutionist beliefs also led them to assert that they could be applied only in a limited sense in the colonies. In colonial societies only a limited scope for individuality and equality existed. For the British in India, all Indians had an equal, though subject, status in the public sphere. All religious communities also were to be treated equally, including Hindus. They saw their role as one of mediating between different religious communities in the public sphere which developed over the nineteenth century as a result of colonial policies. The assumption regarding the subject status of Indians was of course dropped in independent India. It is interesting however that the colonial perspective regarding separate and equal religious-cultural communities

continues to influence the terms of political discourse. Relating religion to culture and acknowledging the cultural affiliations of people rather than their shared humanity influenced even the deliberations of the Constituent Assembly. But it left unresolved the issue of how independent India define its national political culture and the relationship of minority cultures to it.

Classical liberal democratic theory worked with a conception of a society composed of individuals whose religious and cultural affiliations would not get recognition in the public sphere of the state. It advocated a politically neutral public sphere in which universal laws and non-discriminatory procedures governed peoples lives leaving them free to pursue their own conception of the good so long as these were not prohibited by law. The state should be neutral and colour blind in its treatment of citizens. This might seem like an acceptable principle to follow in a multicultural state but it has been pointed out by philosophers like Charles Taylor that the value of neutrality might be alien to the culture of some groups in society and then the State will not appear neutral to them. Further, it is doubtful whether any state could be held together only by laws and procedures. Nation-states need a unifying myth, a shared sense of identity. It is probably true that no state in the world could be described as a purely procedural state although this is part of the official ideology of states like France. But even in France a strong sense of French language and culture exists and provides a cultural identity to the State. Therefore, the need for a public culture has been recognized by contemporary liberal political theorists like Joseph Raz. Raz has argued for the need of an 'encompassing' culture to hold a state together, for principles of public morality, though states should avoid espousing values which would cause dissension. Nor should states impose any values. But the question remains of what could constitute a public culture for India.

Different and even opposed views about what should constitute the unifying principles of the public sphere in India coexisted in the national movement. But the view which dominated the Constituent Assembly and the early years after independence was the Nehruvian vision of a secular, caste-less, and egalitarian society. The pillars of the Nehruvian edifice were industrialization, secularism, socialism and non-alignment. Nehru hoped that industrialization and modernization would break down

'primordial' and parochial loyalties, would privatise them and provide a new ethos and world view for the tradition-bound people of India (*India, Today and Tomorrow*, Azad Memorial Lecture, Calcutta, 1960). But in practice Nehru had to compromise and negotiate with powerful sections of opinion in the country. The ideological consensus which was built around his vision was always fragile and found its strongest supporters among urban elites. It was already breaking down by the time he died.

The Indian Constitution dealt with the issue of defining the principles of the public sphere by combining a number of different principles evolved in response to complex demands. The liberal principle of equal citizenship and equal civil and political rights was accepted. So also was the principle of universal and non-discriminatory laws and procedures and equal protection of the law for all citizens. The only exceptions were made for Scheduled Castes and Tribes to compensate them for past discrimination and provide a more 'level playing field'. The minorities demanded protection of the state for their religions and cultures but opposed the possibility of an established state religion. Therefore separation of state and religion was affirmed in the refusal to establish a state religion and the provision that tax income should not be used for religious purposes. But some recognition was also given to the collective rights of religious communities and special provision was made to protect the religious practices and cultural and linguistic rights of communities. Religious groups in general got the same kind of rights as other social associations with regard to political mobilization. The state was to be non-discriminatory between but not separate from, religious groups. Hindus, though a majority community, received no special rights in the Constitution, something which perhaps reflected British practice but which has produced some resentment from time to time. In fact, a complex and nuanced resolution of the problem of difference was sought. But this resolution has come under strain in the decades which have followed and the issue of the national political culture remains on the agenda.

The issue of how to define Indian nationalism and what could provide a cultural identity to the nation rouses strong emotions today. The Nehruvian view was that Indian culture could form the basis of the nation-state since Indian culture was not specifically Hindu. It had had a long and continuous development from Vedic times and it was present

in all parts of the country and in all the diverse practices and ways of life which were to be found here. Even though a break might have occurred in the eleventh century the core elements of the culture continued to exist. Indian culture was a composite culture which had had amazing assimilative properties over the years. Hence the title of his book *The Discovery of India*. Attractive though the notion of a composite culture may be, it leaves room for different interpretations. It could, and sometimes has been, interpreted to mean the assimilation of elements from minority cultures into the overall Indian cultural tradition for instance. True, Nehru tried to keep specifically Hindu practices out of the public sphere and advised politicians not to participate in public religious practices nor to flaunt caste or religious labels. But his advice was not extensively followed even in his life-time. Moreover, there are no clear guidelines about how to distinguish Indian from Hindu. For instance, is lighting lamps to be considered to be Indian or Hindu religion or culture? Or the breaking of coconuts? It could be argued that Nehru's position was ambiguous because it shared important aspects with what could be considered more essentialist theories of Indian culture, for instance the emphasis on the continuity and all-pervasiveness of Indian culture, and an Advaitic notion of cultural unity, and that it could therefore merge easily with less secular perspectives. But in defense of Nehru it must be said that his belief in a secular Indian culture was distinguished also by a respect for other Enlightenment values such as equality and social justice and a strong commitment to democracy which do not find a place in other perspectives.

An alternative conception of Indian nationalism claims that Hinduism or Hindutva, constitutes the unifying cultural identity of the nation. This conception draws Orientalist views about Indian culture. Culture, religion, race, and language were linked in this view. An essentialist perspective found the core of the culture in language (Sanskrit), race (Aryan), certain texts, and the unifying mode of social organization (caste). In this view Indian culture was Hindu culture and other non-Indian religions were therefore alien to the culture of the country. It was emphasized that Hindu culture has had a continuous existence from the earliest times although there were breaks during the Islamic and British invasions. Caste formed a constitutive aspect of Hindu social organization. Cultural-nationalist additions to the Orientalist view have

added only a few emphases to this formulation. One is that culture and religion are also linked to nationalism so that Indian nationalism is linked to Hinduism. Hinduism is perceived as grounded in the country, its natural features and its history. Therefore, it is stressed that Hinduism is truly national because its sacred places and legends are linked to the territory. There is some ambiguity however about whether Hinduism should be considered a way of life which encompasses all aspects of belief and everyday practice, or whether it should be defined more narrowly. In the broader perspective its assimilative qualities are stressed. It can assimilate difference but Semitic religions tend to exclude themselves from it. Sects like the Sikhs, and Buddhists and lower castes, who deny being Hindus are misguided and they cannot really divest themselves of their cultural identity by such statements. In the more exclusive view, benefits like reservation which have been extended to lower castes should be reserved only for Hindus and are not for those who have left the religion, incl. Buddhists and Sikhs.

Cultural-nationalist narratives have retained the notion of the organically integrated and bounded religious-cultural community to describe minority religions at least. The boundaries of communities may be considered to be self evident and unchanging although there is enough evidence to illustrate how much more fluid the sense of community identity has been in the past and how much boundaries have been, and are being, drawn and redrawn in response to government laws and policies and electoral compulsions. The view of religious groups as integrated communities also suffers from other weaknesses associated with the anthropological usage mentioned earlier in the paper — for instance, the neglect of issues of power and exploitation within and between communities. It has been pointed out by sociologists that some nationalist perceptions are already embodied in the laws of the country. The *Hindu Code Bill* of 1955 for instance defined Hindu as including not only different sects like the Veerashaivas and Arya Samaj but also Buddhists, Jain, and Sikhs. And ‘any other person domiciled in territories to which this Act extends who is not a Muslim, Christian, Parsi or Jew..’. Similarly with the *Hindu Marriage Act* and the *Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act*, 1956. Such provisions also frame the rules regarding conversion which concern mainly the conversion of Hindus to non-Indic religions.

Minority positions, if one may refer in just a very cursory way to some of them, may also include many ambiguities. There is in general rejection of the view that Indian culture is Hindu culture and that this means that religion cannot be separated from culture in the case of Hinduism at least. The association of Hinduism with nationalism, race and language would also be justifiably rejected. A Nehruvian notion of a composite and shared national culture would be more acceptable to most groups. Yet the notion that minority religious groups do not have distinctive and bounded cultures which have to be defended may not always be acceptable, in fact, it may be sometimes zealously opposed. Moreover, at times religious communities in India may construct themselves as identity groups and adopt the tactics of identity politics to pursue the interests of the group at the political level. This again means basing their claims on a sense of the separate social and cultural identity and interests of the group. The deployment of culture for identity politics has raised many issues. The difficult issue of theorizing the relationship between a more open and flexible understanding of community identities and the national culture then remains unresolved.

The Secularism Debate

An influential contemporary group of neo-communitarian and neo-Gandhian social scientists in India (for instance, Ashish Nandy, Partha Chatterji, T.N. Madan, and others), has tried to mediate between what they term the secularist view about public culture and state in India which aims to separate culture from religion and religious practice and collective identities from the public sphere, and the cultural nationalist perspective which unites religion and culture and nationalism. They reject the possibility of a procedural state in India governed by liberal principles, arguing that not only does liberalism not have deep roots in India but that the nature of Indic religions makes it inappropriate to try and have a public sphere in which religious affiliations are not recognized. Moreover, liberalism assumes an individualist society. A solution built around communities would be more appropriate for India, they maintain. But they also reject nationalist attempts to impose a common culture. They would prefer to work with the kind of inclusive view of Hinduism which they feel existed in the past and which associated Hinduism with dharma and dharma with a way of life. They argue that the perception of inter-community boundaries was more flexible in the pre-modern

period and this allowed for a degree of shared rituals and toleration which existed between communities on the ground in many parts of the country. For the contemporary period they favour Gandhis' radical interpretation of Hinduism as an alternative way of organizing the public sphere. Gandhi had a holistic and religious vision but he tried to secularize Hindu concepts like dharma within a spiritual framework. He not only advocated granting respect to the different religions in the country but he also identified with them and was even ready to adopt their values. This was the basis of Gandhis support for the Khilafat movement for instance.

These proposals have provoked a lively debate in recent years. Critics have argued that not only have these theorists worked with a somewhat caricatured version of secularism as a philosophy which is anti-religious, even atheistic, they have also worked with a romanticized view of pre-modern India. Sumit Sarkar, for instance, has written that 'The different voices of the past were a reflection of plurality only in terms of a non-singular, more than one voice, not in any conceptual sense' (Sarkar, 1994). While local principles of coexistence may have existed between religious communities in many areas, these may not necessarily have excluded power and domination. Instances of violence and conflict also existed. One may also question their neo-communitarian critique of modernity and the nation-state and the celebration of indigenous culture and communities. It is unfortunate that in their endorsement of community as a truly indigenous mode of organization, these theorists have not addressed the problem of evolving a more historically and materially grounded theory of community which could confront issues of power and exploitation more effectively. Nor have they provided an alternative to nationalist suggestions that separate religious-cultural communities become the basis of the Indian state though suggestions have been made by some theorists (D. L. Sheth, Sudipto Kaviraj), for the reorganization of the Indian state as a civilizational state which would govern society only lightly. It should decentralise significant powers to local communities and give up claims to be a nation state. Not only do these suggestions remain at a programmatic level, they do not confront the issue of inequalities and injustices in society and how they can be

tackled. By downplaying the importance of equality and democratic values these theorists lay themselves open to the charge that they share significant ground with their nationalist opponents.

The question of how to construct a public culture for the state is a complex and politically charged one. The issue has come to the forefront of political attention today and needs to be addressed to confront attempts to privilege fundamentalist resolutions of the problem. I have argued that so far as the primary perception of Indian society remains one of different, bounded, cultural-religious communities interacting with each other it would be difficult to address the issue. It is unfortunate that attention has focussed almost exclusively on the issue of inter-community relations to the neglect of the democratic and egalitarian principles which also formed a part of the Constitution. But any attempt to discuss inter-community relations without also addressing issues of the democratization and transformation of society restricts the scope of possible solutions. Both aspects need to be addressed. As for the question of what principles should govern the public sphere it would seem most appropriate that some acceptable notion of a secular state which does not privilege any religion, nor discriminate against any, nor involve the state in religious practices, nor financially support religious activities, should be worked out. This may involve more careful separation of state from religious practice than at present and less interference, even for benevolent purposes, in the affairs of religious communities. Contemporary liberal theory offers the possibility of such resolutions.

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A Holistic View of Culture and Religion

Thomas Manickam

Introduction

Holism is a favourite word today, meaning a vision of integral relationship of various components of a system, of which every part is not understood as an autonomous discrete unit but as constituting an ‘integral whole’ functioning in conjunction with the wholeness of the system for the common and unique purpose of the system as a whole. On the level of inter-dependence and inter-relationship of various parts of a whole, “holistic” means a view of integration of all parts of a system as constituted to function as one whole, and viewing the whole also in some way defining the nature and function of the parts. Any organic system, especially our own bodies, our personalities are obviously the best examples of holism, if our psycho-somatic-pneumatic parts are harmoniously balanced to function for a healthy and value-based meaningful life. Human Culture and Religion are also holistic wholes interacting vigorously with mutually complementing interrelationship, constitution, function and purpose, values and meaning.

1. Culture and its main features

“Culture” is generally understood as the refined behavior of a people/ community adapted to the challenges of the living environment and the changing times of their progress. It is also most often a byword, if not a synonym, for civilization. Yet there is some fundamental difference between culture and civilization. Culture refers to the internal transformative changes of the mentality and manners of a people as they grow in civilization. But civilization is mostly the process of adaptation of the same people to the demands of the technological progress which they themselves invented / discovered by their own genius or borrowed by way of interaction with other peoples of the

neighborhood. While civilization displays the external patterns of behavior of a people in close association with the tools of their utilities and activities, culture describes the mentality of the same people attuned and refined by the frequent use of the tools of civic life; and it also sets customs and manners of behaviour, developed by way of following the conventions of the forefathers in conformity with the social needs of the same people in constant interaction with other peoples. Culture consists of both the internal forces at work in the mentality of a people identifying themselves to be different from that of other neighborhood peoples, and their civic expressions of the same in the context of their contemporary challenges.

Cultural elements are transmissible to subsequent generations by way of educational instructions and imitable life-styles. This process is known as *living tradition* of a people otherwise known as 'heritage'. There may be extinct traditions and living heritages, the traces of the former may be continued in very subtle forms in the latter, and the contemporary generations of the same culture may not be very much critically aware of such traits of their ancestry. In such cases of oblivion, the contemporary communities of a particular culture may attempt to restore their lost connections by means of aetiological researches and comparative studies of their behavior with that of their neighborhood communities. Thus culture is open to *restoration, renovation and innovation* in response to the challenges of the ongoing progressive technological and interactive global civilization. But, if some counter-cultural forces deliberately block the *spontaneous renovations and innovations of a living and vibrant community*, there would spread the disease of *cultural sterility* inhibiting *cultural fertility*, giving way to the repetition of empty rituals making human life to suffer from the boredom of repeating the obsolete formulae or the *mantras* of the bygone ages.

The following specific elements are considered to be the main features of any culture: ¹ Myths, Symbols, narratives of both mythological and historical belief-systems, rites, rituals and recitals, secret formulae or *mantras*, incantations, mystery celebrations, magical healings, customs, manners, food habits, attires, auspicious moments and celebrations, annual cycles of feasts and festivals, memorials, ethical codes, social conventions, religious practices, shrines and places of worship, worship forms, sacred spaces and pilgrimages, proverbs, wisdom sayings,

ancestral precepts, futuristic or eschatological imaginations, oral traditions as well as scriptures containing teachings of ancestral gurus or masters, courtesies and hospitality-gestures, sacred times, sacred signs, as well as secular and social conventions indicating a system of meanings, linguistic nuances, idioms and styles of dialogue and communication, philosophical insights and world-views. All these and more together constitute what is generally known as culture, a 'design for living'.²

2. A Holistic understanding of Culture

Alfred L. Kroeber, one of the eminent American Anthropologists of the second half of this century and Clyde Kluckhohn, in order to bring certain order and co-ordination among the various elements of culture in general, uncovered almost three hundred definitions of culture. Kroeber himself defined culture as "the mass of learned and transmitted motor reactions, habits, techniques, ideas and values — and the behavior they induce."³ Kluckhohn added his own understanding of culture as, "the total life - way of a people, the social legacy the individual acquires from the group."⁴ This has been so cryptically summarized by Ralph Linton as "social heredity",⁵ which was expanded later by Felix M. Keesing, "the behavior acquired through social learning".⁶

The holistic understanding of culture would mean that our humanness which is constitutive of the culture in which we are born and brought up must be understood as much as possible as a single whole. This "single whole - system," called culture, consists of a variety of elements which are integrally connected to one another in such a way that there are elements which cannot be separated from the totality of factors which constitute the existential foundation of our humanness. Such are the factors usually called, physical, social, racial (ethnic), spiritual and religious. These factors are so much interrelated that they function as constitutive parts to the whole, and the whole is not merely the sum total of the parts but having an identity of its own which is shared with the constituent parts organically so much, that the whole is sustained by the interrelated functions of the parts, as the parts themselves are viable units oriented towards the perfection of the whole reality. Human culture is such a wholeness that nothing 'human' could be totally alien to it, nor anything already accepted as human could totally be alienated

from it. We cannot assume that the physical aspects of humans as individuals are primary and all-important, and downplay the social, psychological, spiritual and religious dimensions. Nor can the so-called "more noble things of life," such as art, music, dance and drama, or the elitist "brahmanical" or "heavenly Jerusalem" oriented liturgies be given more importance in preference to the folk arts, values, symbols, myths, styles and rituals which have got down-to-the-earth affinity with the realities of Nature and its rhythm of life. Not everything of folk culture is to be branded as "superstitious" or "primitive" meaning "uncivilized". Holistic understanding of culture would necessarily take seriously the "local culture" as an insider does, with identification, appreciation and assimilation. In fact it is from the "local culture" of the people an outsider would learn the really humanizing elements of an individual culture which could be integrated with the so called "universal elements" of culture, and not vice versa. We don't have one "universal" model culture as setting norms and values for individual cultures so much as to argue that the individual cultures should conform themselves to the "cultural standards and expectations" of the so called "universal model." In fact it is all a "relativity of cultures" that is the underlying principle of holistic understanding of culture in general, and not acceptance of a "universal model" as the yard-setter for all cultures.

3. Social change in the Holistic view of Culture

The understanding of a local culture as a holistic will imply also the need of social change by interaction with other cultures and as a response and reaction to the urges of mutation and growth often emerging from within the culture as drives for survival of the new generations in the face of challenges and competitive struggles with neighboring cultures. This is almost a natural process of mutation of a culture resulting from within the culture and not imposed on it by any superior cultural system. Hence any culture worth its name in its ongoing process of self-affirmations will have to be able to explain social change. In a holistic understanding of culture and its organic process of growth, social change has to happen not as an extraneous intervention of "super cultures", or as an artificial interpolation by means of manipulative strategies of "super powers". In either cases or in any other way interfering with the autonomous growth of an individual culture, there result inhibitions which will stifle the spontaneity and freedom of selection and option of

the details of the values which are integrating into the fabric of one culture. Hence our vigilant concern towards any individual culture must be to guard both its soul and body in view of enabling its adherents to strengthen their sense of identity, self-respect and vision of their noble value based life and progress, over against any foreign imposition of models and patterns which are not promotive of the genius of an individual culture. It is in this perspective that we speak of a '*composite*' culture as that of Indian culture which is a motherhouse of numerous cultures having their own holistic identities as well as certain matrix-unity, mutually acceptable, tolerable and, therefore, co-existing with broader common human concerns to live and assert a family identity, called "Indian Culture". Indian culture, so identified in most holistic functional terms, is not a monolithic pattern, nor a uniform fabric, nor a museum of species-collections or an ironed out product of a violent socio-economic revolution. Nor is it an offshoot of a political imperialism controlled by any one dictator, or military *junta* or the product of an invasion of a particularly sweeping ideological wave of thoughts, but a fusion of several strands of an evolutionary process of many valuable elements, natural, material and spiritual as well as religious, blended organically, holistically, in one large geographical sub-continent surviving a long stretch of time process, part of which is lived and stored in the memories of our ancestors in their own symbolic formats, known as "myths", and part of which is being lived by us all in the recordable phases of time, known as "history". In fact our Indian Composite Culture is making its history with an identity of its own in the "global Village" as inspiring and challenging other world cultures in many ways unique to itself while functioning holistically. Our social change, therefore, is not merely a blind slavish imitation or adapted social behaviour compromising with the pressures of other cultures acting upon ours, but very much a selective one along the lines of a holistic functioning of the composite character of our culture, taking a via media in almost all areas of our national cultural value based life-systems related to education, economics, political theories, human resources - development, spiritual forces operating in a "secular" framework, while respecting the "sacred" enclosure of a sustaining religiosity which allows a variety of windows opened to the "pluralistic" possibilities of "God experience and expressions".

4. The Sacred links of Culture with Religion

As culture is the 'design of living of a people', and every human being is a cultural being, Culture is a constitutive factor of human existence in its entirety. From a Biblical perspective human being is more than what culture has constituted him or her. Every human being is created as an 'image of God' (Gen. 1:26), and according to the creation myth, the humankind was first placed in the 'Garden of Eden' by the sheer generosity of God, the human couple were allowed to develop their attitudes to other beings of the Garden in their own endearing way, while responding to God's call in obedience and friendship. It was a culture of a refined garden-setting of God's imagination. Generations which continued this pattern of obedience to and friendship with God, developed a culture of religious links with God and His creation. This sacred link of culture to the designs of God is not exclusive to Biblical religions. In the history of any culture we may observe many sacred links with certain Creator God. This is true regarding ancient shamanistic religions, and the later historical religions like Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Allowing concessions to each religion to maintain its own respective sacred links of cultural significance, we may observe the following sacred links as most commonly shared by almost all religions and their various sects in a variety of shades and versions, names and forms:⁷

Creation narratives as cosmogonic myths, myths of primeval innocence, period of harmony and integrity (*kritayuga*) and the stories of the "fall of mankind from the creative period of harmony" or the myths of successive decadence (*treta - dvapara - kaliyugas*) of human history of the progress of civilization and the decadence of cultural values. Consequent to the experience of cultural and moral decadence, beliefs in divine sanctions and reparatory or redemptive or expiatory rituals, purificatory rites, rites of initiation, sacraments and sacramentals, benedictions, shrines for pilgrimage, penitential acts, confessions and penances, prayers, alms-giving, fasting and abstinence, head shaving, ritual baths, ablutions, etc. were prescribed or instituted in a variety of forms as effective sacred links of cultural refinement and moral integrity before the "Lord of creation" to be found favourable with the Divine Ultimate. Most of these sacred links are common

to a number of religions although they may differ in their articulations, administrations and ritual disciplines and practices. These are also followed by religions which shared common cultural milieu in their original cultural settings as well as in their cross-cultural interactions.

In this connection we may also note the holistic complementarity of culture and religion, mutually feeding and supplementing, integrating and perfecting, supporting and completing in an intertwined manner on a higher plane of aesthetic experience of the true spirit of Religion, which is ultimately linking humans with the Divine, the most central focus of Religion as such. Since many cultural anthropological studies have shown that almost all peoples the world over, have developed their religious concepts very much along the line of their culture, and culture also has a rich wealth of aesthetic expressions, most of the symbolic rites and rituals, sacraments and benedictions are highly aesthetically evocative of some sublime beauty, charm and relish (*rasā*) and as such they lead religiously disposed people to the experience of a certain transcendental bliss (*ānanda*), and this is experienced as the highest joy of the intimacy, union or communion with the foundational principle of all holism and holistic interrelationship between Culture and Religion. A culturally refined religious person may feel this as God-experience, because the foundational coordinating principle is also the Ultimate Spirit-power that permeates as the hidden interlinking causality (*samavāya*) of a culture, which is holistic in structure and form and aesthetic in fine symbolic articulations which embody the authentic spirit of true religion. Thus Culture and Religion are intimately interrelated and they complement each other in their mutual process of growing together in view of supporting the total development of a people which maintains a holistic world view in their culture, educational practices, economic management, social involvement, jurisprudence and political administration. What we need today in India, I feel, is such a holistic vision of human life, in its polyvalent relationship with our composite culture - peoples and their multidimensional problems caused by the very pluralistic cultural linking with all the variety of religious expressions of our national identity.

5. A Holistic way of life in a Pluralistic Culture

It is now an accepted fact that our Indian culture is pluralistic and

yet it is considered as a “composite” culture. In its composite structure itself there is much for a holistic perception of our common cultural bases and integrate many of our cultural values into a common fabric of life-styles of the various communities with strong religious affiliations which have given birth to strongly built-up identities. Most of these cultural and religious identities are “ethnocentric” in nature and function. *Ethnocentrism* can be a block to holistic perception, vision and way of life of the humans in a pluralistic society. Considering one’s own ethnic group or community as the centre of all cosmic activities is generally understood as ethnocentrism. “To view other people’s way of life in terms of our own cultural glasses is called ethnocentrism.”⁸ Ethnocentrism is mostly a tribal mentality of commanding control over other peoples under the pretext of possessing privileged titles, and positions in the context of competitive claims of historical precedence. It is a tendency of all culturally dominating groups to regard the ways of life and values of one’s own society as normative for all others. Such consideration of one’s own ethnic group as the model, even as a “chosen people of God elected from among many nations” is a dominant ethnocentric conception in the Bible. This consciousness is also inherited by the Judeo-Christian and Islamic traditions. In the Indian culture similar ethnocentric patterns are perpetuated by the people of the orthodox brahmanic traditions under mythical conceptions. These groups believe that they are destined to be model peoples for others to follow, or themselves to remain as “pure breeds born from the mouth of the supreme being”, and as such to remain isolated from the general mass not to be mixed with the “low cultured”. This kind of self-imposed cultural ghettos of certain communities, which are often responsible for communal violence and provocation of militant fundamentalism, have to be tamed by means intercultural socialization of community participation. It is here and in similar situations that “holistic praxis” - intercommunitarian participational programmes - for healthy social growth of the whole community in an affected area has to be regularly organized, monitored and coordinated by governmental bodies as well as by non-governmental organizations and by social conscientizing inter-religious and intercultural bodies. Thus the holistic vision of human life and culture has both theoretical vision and practical action programmes.⁹

Over against ethnocentrism we have to promote the ideology of "cultural validity", or the doctrine usually referred to as "cultural relativism". Cultural relativism is not a blanket statement that all cultures are relative to one another and there is no universal normative culture or cultural norms for higher evaluations of the various world or tribal cultures. Rather as Charles H. Kraft describes, "cultural validity" maintains that an observer should be careful to evaluate a culture first in terms of its own values, goals, and focuses before venturing to compare it (either positively or negatively) with any other culture".¹⁰ This doctrine was developed to combat the prevailing ethnocentric tendency to evaluate other cultures to their disadvantage by always focusing on areas of life in which the evaluator's culture has specialized. Westerners thus tend to evaluate as "primitive" all cultures that do not show a degree of technological development comparable to that of western cultures. The cultural - validity model is based on the recognition that certain cultures have specialized in one area of life while others have specialized in other areas of life. (e.g., technology as standard of development for some cultures, but solid family structures for others. Comparisons between cultures tend, therefore, to be made unfairly on the basis of whatever criteria the one who does the comparing deems most important. Many anthropologists have found that "it is objectively impossible to distinguish world-wide levels of cultural progress"¹¹. Further they have concluded that cultures are to be regarded not as assignable to some level of overall superiority or inferiority with respect to other cultures, but, rather, as more or less equal to each other in their overall ability to meet the needs felt by their members. In this sense it is felt that any given culture shapes a way of life that must be seen as valid for those immersed in it. Cultures are therefore both as good as each other and as bad as each other in shaping that way of life. None is any where near perfect, since all are shaped and developed by human beings who are always on the move to improve upon a given model with future possibilities and new creative imaginations. As Melville Herskovits, concludes, the very core of cultural relativism is the discipline that comes of respect for differences — of mutual respect.¹²

6. Holistic Worldview of Culture vis-a-vis Religion

Every Culture embodies a certain worldview (*weltanschauung*) which is often stored in "the collective unconscious" of the people. This

worldview is the central systematization of conceptions of realities related to a particular human society, to which the members of the culture largely assent and from which stems their value system. The worldview lies at the very heart of culture, touching, interacting with and strongly influencing every other aspect of the culture. Religion and belief systems of a people are integral ingredients of the worldview of a people and their culture. In the worldview of a people their culture and religion encounter each other and in many ways interact and complement for mutual enrichment and progress.

The worldview of any culture presumably originated in unspecified antiquity out of a series of agreements, articulated or collectively accepted as lived experiences by the members of the original group concerning their perception of the realities of their life in their own times. This, like all other aspects of culture, has undergone constant change so that it now differs to a greater or lesser extent from its original worldview and from other extant worldviews that have developed in the neighborhood. The younger generations of a society are compelled to fall in line with the demands of their culture of birth, adapted to the cultural modalities and expectations of their parental cultural ancestry by means of the familiar process of parental instructions, regular social practices to the tune of the routine patterns of behavior of the elders and peers as well as by formal cultural education. In this way each youngster reared in a given culture is conditioned to interpret the realities of life in terms of the conceptual framework of that culture. For example, if a person's culture conceives of the relationship between the universe and humanity as a *dominance-submission relationship* in which persons simply submit uncomplainingly to circumstances without seeking to gain dominance over them, those persons will ordinarily learn to perceive their relationship to the universe in these terms.

The worldview of a culture or subculture functions as the "central control room" of that culture. There are five cultural functions operative from this central control room :¹³

(1) Explanatory function, (2) Evaluational function, (3) Reinforcement function, (4) Integrating function, (5) Adaptational function.

All these functions of the *worldview-control-room* are *holistic* in their co-relation and coordination as summarily explained below:

- (1) The *explanatory function* holistically demonstrates how and why the cultural elements of a people got to be as they are, and how and why they continue to be or change. For example, if the worldview of a people conditions them to believe that the universe is operated by a number of invisible *personal forces* largely beyond their control, this will affect both their understanding of and their response to "Reality". But, if a people's world-view explains that the universe operates by means of a self-contained *impersonal cause-and-effect-cause chain operations* which, if learned by people, can be employed by them to control the universe, the attitude of these people toward "Reality" will be much different from that of the previous one. These are the ideas which are customarily articulated symbolically in the *myths* of peoples; and mythology takes a variety of forms from culture to culture, religions to religion, as these two often interplay in the formation of myths.
- (2) The *evaluational function* of the world view of a culture judges and validates the basic institutions, values, and goals of a society moved by ethnocentric impulses. Other people's customs and traditions are evaluated to be inferior in qualitative comparison with the referring culture, and in the case of most of the cultures of the world the ultimate ground for such sanctions is supernatural. It is by their God or gods that most people understand their worldview and their culture as a whole to be validated. As with its explanatory function, the evaluational function of a people's world view is holistic to every aspect of the life of the social group. All important and valued behaviour, whether classified as economic, political, "scientific", social, educational, or whatever, is judged in terms of a culture's world-view assumptions, beliefs, values, meanings, and sanctions.
- (3) The *psychological reinforcement function* operates in crisis situations of the people. At points of anxiety or crisis in life it is to one's conceptual system that one turns for the encouragement to continue or discover stimulus to take reparatory actions. Critical times such as death, perils, illness, transitional periods such as puberty, marriage, times of uncertainty, all of them tend to heighten anxiety, or in some other way require adjustment between behaviour and belief. Each of these tends to be dealt with in a reinforcing manner by the worldview of a society. Often this reinforcement takes the form of a ritual or ceremony in

which many people participate as on occasions like, funerals, annual memorials, initiation or graduation ceremonies, harvest celebrations etc.

(4) In the *integrating function* the worldview of a people systematizes and orders for them their perceptions of realities into an overall design. In terms of this integrating perspective or design the people conceptualizes what realities should be like, and interprets the multifarious events to which they are exposed. Thus a people's worldview "establishes and validates basic premises about the world and man's place in it; and it relates the strivings and emotions of men to them."¹⁴

(5) The *adaptational function* of a culture is its ability to cope with the challenges of changing times and the ability for self-correction in the context of the discovery of 'internal structural contradictions'¹⁵ that occur in the process of cultural change. People of a particular culture by accommodating their worldviews to the new demands of the new generations and even assimilating certain values of the adjacent cultures which are more progressive than their own functions in more resilient ways and in more tolerant ways than their forefathers and ancestors. Thus they try to resolve cultural conflicts by reducing cultural dissonance, even "agreeing to disagree" while tolerating the opposites. This adaptational function indicates the inner strength of a culture for self-transformation.

7. A Holistic Interpretation of Life in Indian Culture

Let me conclude this study with some application of holism to our life in Indian Culture. Indian culture, though it is composite in nature, has offered a holistic view of human life to be lived with the observance of the values of culture (*samskriti*), material wealth (*artha*), human intimacy (*kāma*), practice of spiritual means (*yoga sādhana*), moral integrity (*dharma*), and the value of ultimate liberation (*moksha*). All these six values are not autonomous and discrete in their functioning, but holistically interrelated, and complement each other in view of attaining human perfection and fulfillment in life. Cultural values contribute to make a person more disciplined, good mannered, refined and polished in social behaviour to live up to the expectations of the family and social conventions of Indian culture. In Indian cultural tradition it is called *āryacharitam* (cultured behaviour). Acquisition of material wealth has to be a means for attaining the necessary

life-supporting resource of life, in terms of property, money, or the wealth of knowledge (*vidya*) and skill-training (*kaśualam*) for acquiring the necessary means for self sustenance or family maintenance. The value of human intimacy safeguards both healthy friendship and human relationship reaching the heights of happy family life on the bond of sacred matrimony provided the partners observe healthy hygienic practices and honest mutual fidelity on the sacred bond of conjugal love. The family is a holistic institution of our Indian culture; it interlinks almost all elements of our cultural fabric assuring lasting interpersonal fidelity and security, spiritual enrichment for the partners of love under certain religious sacramentality which is conceived as a cultural component.

Human life has to be spiritually enriched by means of practicing appropriate *yoga sadhana* suitable for each person's aptitudinal difference (*adhikāribhedam*). The fourfold *yoga*, (*Ashtāṅga yoga*, *jñāna yoga*, *bhakti yoga*, and *karma yoga*) helps a person to integrate the various aspects of his *psycho-somatic-pneumatic* levels of his personality into a holistic harmony of the experience of the unifying forces in him/her. Moral values (*dharma*) and the ultimate spiritual liberation (*moksha*) are so interrelated that without the one the other remains impossible to realize. This holism is a configuration of Indian cultural values integrated with spiritual and religious values described as the *Indian way of life* having its own "world- view".

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Foot Notes

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Religion and Development

Rosamma Veedon

This paper attempts to deal with some of the current development issues. The dominant pattern of development adopted by different countries and local regions; Welfare as an outcome of the unequal distribution of the benefits of development; impact of development at the individual and family level; sustainable development and ecological perspectives and finally the interface of these issues of development on religious beliefs, practices and institutions.

The term 'Development' entered the international agenda after 1945, out of two concerns: the need to reconstruct the economies destroyed by the Second World War and to assist the former colonies in their struggle for emancipation. The initial focus was to equate development with economic growth because countries were lying in ruins and the reductionist theory known as 'trickle down' was widely believed to work. Once the economy was set in motion, the rest would follow and the positive effects of growth would percolate to the bottom of the social pyramid. But soon, it became necessary to bring in other dimensions of development, social, political, cultural and after 1972 environmental (sustainable). The most recent addition is that of human capital, hence we also have the UNDP reports on human development and the Human Development Index.

India too has closely followed this pattern. Soon after Independence the emphasis was on heavy industries, large dams with very little concern for other aspects. After years of development it has been realised that the benefits of development have remained with just a few and have not percolated down to the masses. Primary education and health care has largely been neglected in relation to advanced health care and higher education, and environmental awareness is just a recent phenomenon.

The modern age is characterised by rational thinking, or scientific thought process. It is the belief that human beings can solve all problems if they think rationally, put in hard work and manipulate the natural forces to their advantage. Religious practices on the other hand began with an awe of nature and worshipped natural elements. Rational thinking was incorporated into most of the religious thinking only at a later date. Today at the beginning of the 21st century we have come to a point when we realise that many of the problems faced by human beings are the by products of development, that rational thinking has brought considerable material comforts but it has also brought along with it a host of new problems. We have also come to realise that many of our religious practices, beliefs and institutions have helped deal with the inner turmoil faced by human beings, reached out to people in suffering and poverty but here too it has divided people, brought in suffering, and in many situations extremists have hijacked religion to their advantage.

The western model of development has been widely accepted throughout the developed world and the developing countries are also pursuing the same paradigm. It is characterised by large sections of people moving from agriculture to manufacturing to service industry. The indicators being G.D.P. growth and per capita consumption. The emphasis being on increased production and consumption of goods and services. Quality of human life is measured in terms financial and material assets such as housing, possession of consumer durables, and access to electricity, health and educational services. Human Development Index is another dimension of development with indicators such as birth rate, mortality rate, life expectancy and so on. Development has also been characterised by increased mechanisation, faster movement of goods and capital across a borderless world.

After the collapse of USSR and other east European communist regimes, development is synonymous with economic growth, and is best promoted by privatising public and community assets, deregulating markets, removing barriers to the free flow to trade and investment among nations and privatising knowledge by guaranteeing the protection of intellectual property rights. (Asian NGO coalition et al 1993: 75)

One of the difficulties faced by this model of development is that this type of development is not possible for all peoples of the world. The increased consumption pattern with high production and high wastage is not sustainable. If every one all over the world was to follow this pattern then it would deplete the earth of its natural resources. If we consume more than what nature can produce, we are taking away what belongs to future generations. This model of development has also led to high inequality among nations, and between peoples of the same nation. It is evident that this resource intensive path of development pursued by the Western Industrial societies cannot be carried on into the future at the same pace, nor could it necessarily be applied on a global scale.

Another outcome of the high consumption patterns of the developed countries and the growing poverty of the third world has led to unequal terms of exchange and bargaining power between the rich north and the poor south.

This model of development has co-existed with Judeo-Christian thinking. Here the role played by religion has been to contain the negative impact of development through the establishment of various religious institutions to provide assistance to those who have been left out of the development process. Both religious thinkers as well as developmentalists acknowledge that all human beings require basic amenities of life, namely food, shelter, clothing, health care, and basic education. However, developmental efforts have not yielded these results. People have had to face unemployment and many other hardships through no fault of their own but as a result of the systematic changes brought about by the adoption of a particular paradigm of development. There has been considerable resistance. People have been dropping out of the mainstream and developing a counter culture or culture of their own.

There are some groups like those of the Hippies or Bakti Cults (Hare Krishna Movement) who change their own life style with no realisation that their adventures are basically supported by the system which they seek to reject. Such movements are tolerated as infantile quirks by the system. The basic inequality underlying the global as also the national economic order goes unquestioned.

A key ethical question which the affluent minority must consider is: how much is enough? Can conspicuous consumption be reduced by self-restraint as postulated by Gandhi? Peaceful changes in life-styles, indispensable if we want to achieve sustainability depend on our ability to cope with it. It has been seen that it is mal-distribution and not scarcity that lies at the root of the problem. In India itself all the godowns of the Food Corporation of India are overflowing with food grains while there are many thousands going hungry for want of food. Under consumption and over consumption, under development and over development are two sides of the same coin. Those who pre-empt over 75 per cent of all available resources must moderate their appetites and make room for those whose basic needs are not met. Can religious beliefs, practices, and code of conduct bring about this transformation?

The concept of the welfare state has risen to provide a safety net for people who have had to bear the costs of development.

Mishra (1977; 1984) and Mohan (1988) have spoken of two types of welfare - the Residual and the Institutional. In case of the residual type of welfare, it allows market forces to provide for the needs of the people and the government role is that of providing a safety net for those who cannot cope with the market. In case of the institutional type of welfare, the government take the initiative to provide the services required by the people. Many European countries as well as erstwhile communist countries had adopted these type of policies.

Both these types have had their successes to varying degrees. In the institutional type of welfare, a person in need have been able to have a comparable standard of living as in the case of European countries and communist, and OPEC countries. The major difficulty is in the sustainability of such types of welfare, with the number of need, people increasing and reduction in labour force, it becomes increasingly burdensome on the tax payers, to sustain this type of policies. It should be noted that the Govt does not create wealth. They only distribute wealth that has been collected by way of taxes.

The difficulty faced with the residual type of policies is that it tends to be need based and not universal. Measures to identify and provide help to those in need create a lot of procedural difficulties and also it becomes stigmatising to be in the category of beneficiaries.

The World Health Organisation has recommended that the government should be spending at least 5% of its GDP on health, but our (Indian) government has normally spent much less than 2 percent. The high level of private expenditure is taking toll of the poor households. Local surveys show that on an average, a household in India spends 5-6 per cent of its income to buy curative health care in the market. However expenditure is unevenly spread. This, the rural household spends a larger proportion of their income on health care than the urban households. Similarly, the rich spend a smaller proportion of their total income on health care than the poor. The situation seems to be so bad, that private expenditure on health care has emerged as one of the main causes of indebtedness, asset alienation and poverty (Amar Jesani).

The model of development has brought about considerable material prosperity to large sections of people. However material prosperity alone does not bring along with it happiness and emotional well being. Abraham Maslow's hierarchy needs states that once man's basic needs are met, next in the hierarchy is security needs, then emotional needs and finally the need for self-actualization. Spiritual needs are at the higher end of this hierarchy. A heightened sense of well being is experienced by individuals when they are part of a larger community. In ancient times as well as modern times, religious practices tend to promote community feelings. According to Confucius.

"Ceremonies are the bond that holds the multitude together, and if the bond is removed, those multitudes fall into confusion"¹. Prof. Radcliff Brown in his article on Religions and Society "The efficacy of rites is not important - what was thought important was the social function of rites, i.e their effects in producing and maintaining an orderly society".

The disillusion with development has led large sections of people more away from the main stream. Non-conventional forms of religiosity become more popular during periods of 'rapid social change' something we are experiencing at present.

Many of these who drop out of the main stream believe that modernity is in a crisis. They are profoundly dissatisfied with the dominant values and identities. Work is seen as alienating; politicians are taken to be

corrupt; and consumer culture is taken to be undermining the future of the planet. Many women have been disillusioned by the authoritarian, patriarchal state and the church.

Many people are found to have moved away from conventional religious practices to something which is devised to suit themselves - a synthesis of Christianity, popular psychology, Readers' Digest, folklore and personal superstitions.

Certain sections of people within a country and certain countries at the global level are believed to have benefited disproportionately through the development process. Here too it has not been all gain. There has been a high price to pay in term's individual trauma, psychological problems marital breakdown, dysfunctional families, increase in suicide and chemical dependencies.

Material prosperity at the cost of spiritual vaccum has left many individual, families and communities wondering whether the developmental dream was a reality or an illusion. Many who enjoy the increased prosperity find that it is not as satisfying as they had imagined it would be and perhaps some of the living and working conditions which are common with increased prosperity are indeed detrimental to well-being (David Cox).

We cannot let growth/development overwhelm us, nor can we ignore or keep it at arms length. All human beings require a certain level of comfort to be able to grow and contribute to society. If an individual is constantly worried about where his next meal is going to come, or if he is in constant fear of his physical safety he is not in a position to reach his full potential.

Now that the developmental process has gathered momentum and one cannot put the clock back. It is religion with its widely accepted beliefs, practices, rites and code of conduct that can bring about a balance in society. Traditionally religion played the crucial role in determining the goals of the people and also of the system. Religion represented the authority of the unknown. Currently religion can only play a role if it can fill spiritual void experienced as result of the fast paced life, and dramatic changes taking place in society.

There is also the possibility of unscrupulous elements highjacking the religious agenda to achieve their individual goals. This can be for political power or for personal gains. Religious gatherings and groups become easy targets to push their individual and political agenda.

Religious institutions tend to transcend geographic boundaries, they often cut across class boundaries as well (Smith 1996a). Active participants in religious organisations can, therefore, be exposed to a wide variety of recruitment appeals at the local, national and even international level.

Religions can also provide a 'cultural toolkit' of collectively held meanings and symbols that can be used by movement activists to legitimate the contentious tactics of protest (Swidler 1986, Zald 1996).

The schema of God vs World becomes for the moral absolutist a frame of contentious actions.

The Role of NGOs

Where the state and religious institutions have failed to deliver, NGOs have come in to fill the gap. There are several success stories of NGO effort in the areas of health, education, income-generation, alternative technologies, watershed development, forestry, drinking water, energy housing and rehabilitation.

Many activists (community health activism) have disliked the concepts of philanthropy and welfare. One of the premises they worked on was that the community has the capacity to look after itself provided skills are generated and support provided. Philanthropy and Welfare make them dependent (Amar Jesani).

Activists from almost all spheres are beginning to realise that it is not feasible to confront the most basic problems relating to health, literacy and employment, without engaging with their cultural implications: how people understand these problems within their world views is crucial (Rustom Bharucha).

Many NGOs are linked to inter-national donor agencies. Therefore themes and activities keep changing according to the donor interest in keeping with the dictum "if you have your hand in another person's pocket, you must move when he moves" (Ramachandran, 1996).

Finally the present paradigm of development has some drawbacks. It is doubtful whether it can be sustained as an economic, social and even political proposition. The most needy, the old, the child and the sick are being neglected by the system. It is here that the relevance of religious practices come to the fore. The social message of Christianity "when you did it to the least of my brethren, you did it to me" is as relevant today as it was when it was first uttered. The vast network of local churches have served for the betterment of society whether it is in the field of health, education or providing care. The awareness that all human beings are my brothers and sisters, that there should be some natural justice, that everyone has a right to a certain amount of physical comfort, and if there is suffering it should be out of self-choice and not imposed by anybody else.

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Religion the Cutting Edge of Culture

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Culture according to sociologists is the sum total of values, customs, rituals and laws transmitted from generation to generation, to define a community's collective identity. Religion, on the other hand, is the expression of the ultimate concern of human life. If value is what is worth having or doing it must direct one to what is ultimately valuable. So the basic question is what religion contributes to the sum total of values that are handed down from the origins of humankind to the present and from here to ages ahead. Just like culture religion also is not a product but a process. Hence what is worth examining is the mutual impact of the dynamics of culture and religion.

Religion as a Process

We have to start with some critical assumptions. First of all religion is not something lying on the road to be picked up by anybody. It is not a thing but a dynamism. Secondly it is found not exclusively or even most prominently in what we call religious institutions, which are often determined by social and political forces. Religion is a dynamic system of understanding. It is not a purely subjective understanding but the understanding of any one, sociologist, or anthropologists, or a student of comparative religion who questions why a religious man understands certain things the way he does them. In a scientific approach "we understand understandings not our own." (Geertz). This is analogous to asking why a sociologist understands things the way he does or a greedy man goes after wealth with a single minded dedication. None, believers or non-believers, can afford to discard the value of religion to move people, offer hope, encourage transcendence and provide answers to questions of existence.

Religion is a significant force in modern life - a significance that occurs at the symbolic level and generates action to provide an economic

and political impact on social life. In part the power of religion is the power of symbols, the ability to point to something other than itself, nothing less than reality and it is inter-subjective. Though it affects morality and conscience, it is not primarily ethics and self-examination, but substantially a form of consciousness, shapes consciousness, and is one of the competing ways of interpreting social reality and determines action. It creates an inter-subjective world in which values, meaning and destiny take shape. It is a dynamism that may not be felt by those who probe from the outside. The task of research is not to explain or explain away religion. It is a question of understanding, understanding also why we do what we do. As Dilthey says, "Nature we explain, but psychic life we understand":

Religion, however, is not a mere personal search that can be reduced to the psychological level, restricting it to the unconscious. It looks for inter-subjective expression comprising both the ordinary and the extraordinary. In fact, as Heidegger stated, "At bottom the ordinary is not ordinary; it is extraordinary, uncanny." It is from our mundaneness that religion derives its direction and force. One is a body in the world and a mind among minds. When we examine religion what we find are essential questions, though all do not agree on the answers. In religion and science we find the same questions. Both believers in religion and believers in science create world-views, use symbols and create meaning out of meaninglessness. In fact, religious truths do not exist in the abstract but as realized in concrete in a particular cultural situation. That is why religious structures including ecclesiastical organization are basic requirements for any religion. Schleiermacher attempting a theology of evangelization said that mission is not communicating an abstract gospel, but gospel as realized and expressed in a particular culture. There is, however, need to distinguish between the gospel from its cultural reifications.

Instrumentalization of Religion by Culture

Since culture is much broader than religion including a lot of values other than religious, culture can and often does distort religion. Precisely because the religious process seeks inter-subjective expressions embracing the whole of culture, these expressions can sometimes distort the religious insight itself and bring it down to the level of purely secular

pursuits or on the other hand, elevate the mundane to the spiritual level. T.R. Young illustrates both by a critical examination of Christian celebration of Christmas and Easter especially in America.¹ Thus Christmas is used to interpret the structure of an alienated society that seeks a temporary solution to it within the nuclear family through gift giving. For six weeks beginning in October amid great excitement and effort, Christmas is made to embody the full range of these distortions: The consumption of non-necessary products come to preempt the meaning of Christmas as communal activity. The notion of religious experience as a bonding oriented to the widest possible solidarity is de-emphasized. The notion of the Church as an encompassing fellowship in which each person stands in supportive relation to all is quietly displaced by the notion of Christmas as a mass of isolated families engaged in a great shopping spree, responding more to the needs of the industrial capital to produce and dispose of high profit. In Marcusian analysis the Christ of Christmas goes to sanctify an expanding layer of false needs.

On the other hand, Easter, which has not been exploited much by the culture of capitalism and mass media, typifies change and renewal in the social order. Christ first appears as a revolutionary challenging the established order. The Easter semeiology or interpretation of symbolism creates and helps to recreate a Christ of new ideology. The suffering of Christ represented the rejection of a sinful world. His association with the thief on the cross showed his identification with the outcastes and the marginalized. Christ at Easter reflects the alienation of humanity. The crucified Jesus continues to rage against the corruption of every society in which any one suffers from structural sin, war, profit, privilege or denial of a common human past. Redemption from sin was achieved through Christ's death. Resurrection was the promise of transcendence. Emphasis on holy Mother Mary symbolized the unity of humanity as a new family. The symbol of the Easter egg painted in spring colours indicated new life. Renewal of the human spirit and reconstitution of the moral order pointed towards a new community. Emphasis was placed on the Church as the new social unity in the place of the nuclear family.

Anthropologists and sociologists generally tend to reduce religion to their own limited sciences. A good example is Corrine G. Dempsey's

recent book *Sainthood in Kerala*². She is an American scholar who came to Kerala to investigate the saintly fame of Blessed Alphonsa. Father Francis Acarya of Kurisumala bluntly told her that Western formation only helped to distort the Oriental ideals of spirituality. Piqued by this remark she sets out to prove that beneath the so called Western ideals there is another layer contributed by the same Western influence that seeks self-identity in one's own social background. Thus English education helped to create a sense of freedom and self-identity. She picks up two examples from Kerala, the popular devotion to Blessed Alphonsa and the widespread cult of St. George. The popularity achieved by Blessed Alphonsa without the power of money and influence with the Vatican shows that people have imbibed from the same Western education an undercurrent of passion for simplicity, poverty, suffering and sacrifice. Similarly popular devotion to St. George, the dragon killer, brought by the British and encouraged by the Portuguese shows an admiration for heroism, fearlessness and other popular virtues. She writes off the dozen or so Syro-Malabar candidates to sainthood as result of the wealth and social influence of the Syro-Malabar Christians and the presence of many Syro-Malabar priests in Rome, over against the poverty of the Latin Christians. The author completely ignores the fact that St. George is originally an Oriental saint taken to the West by the Crusaders, that he is a Christianized form of god Marduk slaying the primeval dragon Tiamat, and that for the Christians he was a symbol of the Risen Christ. Similarly Blessed Alphonsa was a simple Syro-Malabar religious who never got a chance to be influenced by sophisticated Western spirituality.

Such artificial sociological explanations only help to hide the real religious dynamism under disparate cultural data. Most surprising is that Corrine does not understand the cultural role played by Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara to bring the cutting edge of faith to bear upon the cultural conflicts that rocked the Syro-Malabar Church in the 19th century. According to Dempsey the beatification of Blessed Chavara was simply owing to the presence and influence of good many CMI priests in Rome. In fact Blessed Kuriakose should be credited with laying the solid foundation for a genuine Indian spirituality on which all the Syro-Malabar candidates for sainthood built their lives. Rome which had through great many official documents entrusted the ecclesiastical

administration of the Kerala Church to the colonial powers, was simply following the Latinizing policy of the past three centuries made more difficult and impossible by the conflict between the Portugheste Padroado and the Propaganda sponsored Apostolic Vicariate of Verapoly. A section of the frustrated clergy appealed to the bankrupt Chaldean Church, the unwarranted interference of which lead only to tragic schisms like those of Roccos and Mellus. Blessed Chavara at the same time as pleading with Rome for the full restoration of the Oriental tradition, sought to take advantage of the positive elements gained during the Western rule and to build on it a new future. When entrusted with the task of revising and restoring the Divine Office what he did was to collect the different manuscripts and produce a unified text out of them. In fact Blessed Alphonsa was a great devotee of Blessed Chavara and obtained signal favours through him.

Much more than any Western influence what adversely affects religion is the patriarchal culture of the major religions. The firm grip that a patriarchal culture has on religious values is shown by the inferior place assigned to women in most religions like Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam³. Religion is made to legitimize male superiority and to persuade women to be content with their social inferiority. In Hinduism wife is the helper of the husband in offering sacrifice. A woman is subject in her childhood to the father, in marriage to her husband and in later life to her son. So there is a preference for the male child. For Christianity and Judaism God is Father. The Bible is written by men from a male perspective The Old Testament portrays a man's world of war, cult and government. Woman created out of a rib of Adam is the symbol of weakness, uncleanness and temptation. Catholic Church excludes women from priesthood with the reasoning that God became incarnate as a male. But it is not clear why other specific conditions of Christ like race, religion, time and economic situation are not taken as restrictive of the priesthood. So some feminists reject religion as an expression of ultimate concern and center of value and create a parallel structure of faith instead of the old dogma. Others drawing from the pre-biblical past of witches and goddess-worshipers try to construct new feminist spiritual visions and advocate female

ascendancy. Those feminists who accept biblical religion as deeply meaningful seek to reinterpret traditional religion to support the full human dignity of women.

Religion as Ideology

Religion is farthest from culture when it appears as a mere ideology removed from life. According to Durkheim when we celebrate the gods we actually celebrate society, its framework and values. Religion heals, binds, consolidates and transcends societies' wounds. On the other hand, Karl Marx said that when we speak to the gods we are uttering a futile, misdirected, pathetic cry for help to create a better society. Religion is a false healer oriented to private ends distracting us from our social concerns. It is an ideology. But ideology itself is taken in two different senses, In the broader sense ideology is any system of social explanation which constitutes the mindset for classes and individuals who operate within its logic. But in the narrow sense in which Marx and Engels take it, it is a systematic distortion of social reality, which legitimizes the social order and the authority of the dominant classes, the economic base including both the mode of production and the relations of production. It is a necessarily false and misleading set of explanations. Here ideology is opposed to science. Science for Marxists was the application of historical materialism, an explanatory method and system which illuminated the true process of social formation. But as later Marxists themselves came to realize materialism itself was an ideology which tried to explain the whole human experience in terms of matter, just as religion tried to explain it by its spiritual principles.

One has, perhaps, to distinguish between mystifying religious ideologies which justify existing social order and the utopian religious ideologies which challenge the existing social order and motivate people for social transformation.⁴ But those who emphasize the transcendence of religion for example the Christian Gospel over any culture, so that it can be introduced into any culture as an independent entity are making religion a pure ideology to be applied to any situation like a Platonic world of ideas. As Gregory Baum states, "It is one thing to say that the gospel or the proclamation of Jesus Christ can be communicated to any culture, live in it, transform it and achieve in it a new and rich

expression. It is another to say the same thing about Catholicism ... Catholicism is a particular embodiment of the gospel of Jesus Christ, a religious culture".⁵ Catholicism itself is a culture which with its proper ethics of governance has not been able to inculcate itself in Western societies since it is at odds with corresponding ethic of Western democratic societies. However corrupt these democracies may be they have certain ideals and values in terms of which people make their judgments on the actual Performance of their governments. The practical neglect of the equality of all members in the Church and the emphasis on a sharp distinction between the ruling class that makes the laws and the big majority of people that have to obey blindly is abhorrent to the present generation with its memory of the sinister effects of blind obedience in Fascism and Communism.

In this sense the idea of a religious culture such as of Christianity or Hinduism or Islam imposing itself in any particular context is to put the cart before the horse. Each religious culture provides a doctrinal framework and community organization in order to impel and direct people to act. In the face of a new situation these ready made frameworks have to be left behind. The object of religion is to enable the victims of society to face their actual problems with the sense of a transforming faith and thereby create a new culture. So the heart of the whole discussion is the question which experiences and impulses towards action arisen from the encounter with an actual situation in the spirit of religious faith. This is more than an accommodation of one's faith with a pre-existent stereotype of a culture. Hence the idea of multiculturalism itself is ambivalent. The question is about actual people encountering an actual situation, and all the resources of religious faith, which are the common heritage of all humanity, that they bring to bear upon that situation.

Religion and Mission

In trying to communicate one's religious insights to others, owing to the identification of religion to a particular culture or political structure every religion has been militant at one time or other in its history. When Asoka embraced Buddhism he made every effort to see that the whole India, Sri Lanka and all the known world embraced Buddha's Dharma. Later when Hindu kings replaced Buddhist rule, Buddhism which was

the religion of India for over a millennium was wiped out of India not obviously by gentle persuasion but through militant means. Sambandar, the Tamil saint was so acclaimed because he had eight thousand Jain monks impaled to protect Hinduism, just like Elias, the Jewish prophet who in his zeal had eight hundred priests of Baal executed in the name Jewish orthodoxy.

Judaism, Christianity and Islam which arose in the shadow of a foreign culture eventually became militant for their own survival, each with the conviction that its secret doctrine was the only true one and necessary for salvation of all humans. After relentless persecution of Christians for full three centuries when finally one of the Roman emperors, Constantine, became a Christian it was rather as if Christianity had embraced the imperial ways of Rome than the other way round. More converts were made to Christianity by the sword of emperors Constantine, Theodosius and others than by the inspiring example of martyrs who had offered their lives for their faith. Most of the ecumenical councils of the Church convoked on the occasion of heresies were convoked by the Byzantine emperor who felt that doctrinal unity in religion was vital for unity and survival of their political control.

“The connection between political subjection and Christian conversion runs like a scarlet thread through all the so called first evangelization of Latin America.”⁶ The approach to the conversion of the Aztech Indians of Latin America was stated in a report in 1556 of the Jesuits of Brazil to their headquarters in Rome: “Experience teaches us that their (Indios’) conversion is very difficult through love; but as these are a servile people, they are ready for anything as a result of fear.”⁷ By this type of militant approach the Indian population which numbered millions were reduced to a few thousands in a few decades. Pizzaro the Spanish commander with a mere two hundred soldiers and their fire power annihilated the twenty thousand strong army of the Incas, destroyed their religious culture and plundered all the gold used in religious art. The remains of Machupichu hidden in the mountains discovered at the beginning of the twentieth century showed what a well-developed civilization the Incas had. Their king was forced to become a Christian and then strangled to death. A population hundred thousand strong was reduced to three thousand .Those actually converted remained

second class Christians since they did not get a chance to gain any real knowledge of faith in the new religion. At the time of the 5th centenary of the European *conquista* of America thirty bishops of Brazil signed a declaration stating repentance about the atrocities committed against the Aztech and Inca Indians, their religion and culture. Pope John Paul II voiced that repentance in Rome. But the Latin American Bishops' Conference held at San Domingo to celebrate the five hundredth anniversary refused to express any such regret. For them there was no genocide of the Indians. Conversion to Christianity was good for them. In fact Cortes after the subjugation of the Aztechs had sent out Franciscans to impress on the "converted" that their traditional religion had nothing true or valuable in it.

In this context 'inculturation' itself is a very ambiguous word. Some try to avoid the term as far as possible, since it implies the denial of an existing Christian culture and creation of a new one. Some who consider it 'unavoidable' try to interpret it in pre-Vatican II paradigms such as 'conversion', 'church founding', 'integration', 'acculturation' and 'assimilation'. The final document of Santo Domingo speaks in terms of the Christian culture and faith 'invading' and 'penetrating' the, cultures and hearts of peoples to correct their errors. For a third group inculturation is the readiness to get rid of colonialism and ethnocentrism and the recognition of the other as the principle of identity for the Church. The basic principle is "See reality; make a theological judgment and act pastorally".

The simple fact that stands out in the history of religions is that faith itself is culturally conditioned. For the Hebrews wandering up and down the vast desert the only security was trust in Yahweh, the God of heaven, who had a sort of contract with them, that if they were loyal to him, God would be faithful to them. Christianity, on the other hand, confronted with a foreign culture and repressive foreign power saw faith as confidence in the love of the one Father of all, through identification with whose will one could move even mountains. Hinduism saw *sraddha* faith as the fifth fire transcending all the limited levels of experience rising to the height of the One-alone-without-a-second. Buddha who saw the emptiness of the phenomenal world considered faith as taking one's whole being in hand and making a leap in the dark in order to reach the security of the unknown beyond. For Islam fighting

the constricting atmosphere of tribal cultures, *shariya*, obedient faith, was replacing the bond of blood of the tribe with the intimacy of faith through which one entered deeper into the community. In order to understand the true nature of religious faith one has to break open the cultural shell and see the ultimate concern of human life behind it.

Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is a term that is bandied about in this context. A nation or country allows many religions clothed in different cultures to co-exist as equals and interact at the same time. But this only goes to hide the actual reality. What often happens may be a convergence of religious and secular cultures under one or other dominant culture. In reality, as some sociologists distinguish there are in modern society primary and secondary cultures. The primary culture belongs to the home environment including religious practices, language, food, relation to parents and other members and it is in this culture that a child is born and nurtured. Though in traditional societies this home environment may extend beyond home, in modern society out there is a secondary culture consisting of ideas, values and practices promoted by the major institutions of modern society, mass media, technology, democratic institutions and the market. Though this secondary culture may be very powerful, the primary culture may develop into a sub-culture creating community organizations to defend its religious values, their rights and duties against prejudices and the aggressive approach of the secondary culture to "de-culturate" the traditional societies. In fact this struggle of the primary culture against the secondary culture of the industrialized society paradoxically becomes a modernizing process with a dominant role in it for religion and religious values.

Far different was the approach to other religions before the colonial period. Some two hundred and fifty years before the colonialist mission to Latin America Ramon Lull wrote his *Book of the Heathen and the Three Wise Men*. In this Lull creates a dialogue on faith between a heathen and three wise men representing the three monotheistic religions of Islam, Judaism and Christianity. After each of the wise men makes a presentation of his faith the heathen breaks out in praise of God. There is no attempt made by the wise men to convert the heathen. When they depart they ask one another for forgiveness and resolve to

continue the religious dialogue for the peace of humanity. What unites different religions is far more than what divides them. Only bringing out this common ground can one make out what is unique to each religion.

Religions and Myths

As Joseph Campbell has shown through his life-long study of myths a good part of religions is mythology. Stephen Larsen, who wrote a life of Campbell says: "Human beings ceaselessly mythologize their environments. That is why most traditional cultures have a sacred well, tree or mountain, in which this or that event is conceived of happening in *illo tempore*, "that time" in which the veil parted between this world and the invisible one, and something sacred took place. Around that something they will embroider a web of stories, establish a 'frame of reference' and perhaps base a culture or a way of life upon it. Thus sacred space is established, and equally sacred time, marking *when* as well as *where* the event took place (celebrating the birth of Christ in Bethlehem each year at Christmas time.)"⁸ The secular is actually 'profane', literally pro-fanum, the ante-chamber of the sacred.. As Mircea Eliade says the temporal order looks towards the eternal order of things for its meaning. Hence an understanding of human culture is inseparable from mythology. In the words of James Joyce "eternity is in love with the productions of time", and mortality conducts a perennial love affair with immortality. Beneath the higher ideals of human quest for a divine meaning lay a spooky underworld of the dead. God and Satan, Ahura Mazda and Ahriman, Marduk and Tiamat, Indra and Vrtra, Rama and Ravana represented two poles of human aspirations. As Aphraates the Persian sage stated Instead of our ever accurately finding out who or how God is and looking at things from the side of God, what is possible for us is start from our side as images of God and projects initiated by God and imagine how far we can go, and here there is no limit to stop us. Campbell confirms this perspective: "When men have looked for something solid on which to base their lives, they have chosen, not the facts in which the world abounds, but the myths of an immemorial imagination, preferring even to make life a hell for themselves and their neighbors in the name of some violent god, to accepting gracefully the bounty the world affords. In absence of an effective general mythology, each of us has his private, unrecognized,

rudimentary, yet secretly potent pantheon of dream. The latest incarnation of Oedipus, the continued romance of Beauty and the Beast, stands this afternoon on the corner of Forty-second Street and Fifth Avenue, waiting for the traffic light to change.”⁹

Thus the myth of Sisyphus, the king of Corinth who becomes the object irrational anger first of Zeus and then of Hades has a universal religious theme behind it. Hauled before the Judges of the Dead he is punished for his hubris and his scorn of the gods with the sentence of shouldering for all eternity a huge stone upon the forlorn mount in Tartarus. As Homer describes in the *Odyssey* -"with both arms embracing the monstrous stone, struggling with hands and feet alike, he would try to push the stone upward to the crest of the hill, but when it was on the point of going over the top, the force of gravity turned it backward and the pitiless stone rolled back down to the level." He would then push it up again and again for ever. For Albert Camus writing about the myth at the beginning of World War II it was a lucid invitation to live and to create, in the very midst of the desert. With heavy odds against his life and the intention of the gods to make him despair, Sisyphus saw the rock that had rolled down as a fresh challenge and in a heightened sense of self-consciousness felt happy. It is similar to the story of Job in the Old Testament who is tested at the instigation of Satan, loses everything and found his life itself reduced to ashes, still persevered in praising God. The myth does not ennoble suffering, but it ennobles human struggle and courage.

Steps towards Inculcation of Religions

The simple fact one has to start with is that never was there a religion without culture nor culture without religion.. The major religions in their classical stage were closely associated with culture. According to John Chrysostom the Christianity presented by Paul was a multicoloured tablet of enfleshed human virtue. Paul is a personification of the Christian ideal. He combines *proairesis* (= well executed freedom of choice) and *prothumia* (=intensity of will to do the good) bringing together the idea of divine grace giving a share in the life of God and the Stoic catalogue of virtues exposing the authentic depths of human nature. Similarly the Indian religions were associated with the highest human excellence. Lin Yutang in his introduction to *Wisdom of India*, an

anthology of ancient sacred texts states that India was China's teacher in religion and imaginative literature and the world's teacher in trigonometry, quadratic equations, grammar, phonetics, Arabian nights, animal fables, chess as well as in philosophy. She inspired Boccacio, Goethe, Herder, Schopenhauer and Emerson. Max Mueller exclaims: "If we were to look over the whole world to find out the country most richly endowed with all the wealth, power and beauty that nature can bestow, I should point to India. If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered over the greatest problems of life and has found solutions of some of them, which will deserve the attention even of those who have studied Plato and Kant - I should point to India." Similarly according to Schopenhauer, "in the whole world there is no study so beneficial and so elevating as that of the Upanishads."

On the other hand, what we find in the world today even among people who claim allegiance to these ancient religions is a culture of selfishness, individualism and hatred. With the dwindling resources of nature and the hoarding mentality of a sizeable minority a great mass of humanity finds itself in abject poverty. When it is realized that present day poverty is not actually for lack of resources but owing to the greed of a section of people that tries to maintain its high style of living at the cost of the rest, the seed of hatred is already there. The project of globalization placing the mighty economic powers of the industrialized nations and the poorest nations with no purchasing power is seen as pure economic colonialism. Here proposing the high ideals of an abstract religion of being, truth and consciousness appears as mere escapism and in Marxist language applying a palliative opium to the sensibility heightened by the cybernetic explosion. Hence the primary purpose of inculcation is to make religions relevant to the actual life of people, and to bring about the reign of God in a particular time and in a particular place. Religion is no longer the story of the gods, of what happened in *illo tempore* once upon a time, but what happens in the life of people today.

Here the difference between the roles of the prophet and the leader explained at length by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in *The Discovery of India* is quite to the point.¹⁰ Mahatma Gandhi represented the prophet and most of his companions in the freedom struggle the role of leadership.

Gandhi stressed the religious point of view to the extreme and emphasized non-violence even to the extent of disapproving the use of police for the suppression of riots. The 1940 resolution of the All-India Congress Committee at the initial stage of World War II reflected Gandhi's outlook: The part of the resolution ran thus: The All-India Congress Committee "firmly believes in the policy and practice of non-violence, not only in the struggle for Swaraj, but also, in so far as this may be possible of application, in free India. The Committee is convinced, and recent world events have demonstrated, that complete world disarmament is necessary and the establishment of a new and juster political and economic order, if the world is not to destroy itself and revert to barbarism. A free India will, therefore, throw all her weight in favour of world disarmament and should herself be prepared to give a lead in this to the world. Such lead will inevitably depend on external factors and internal conditions, but the state would do its utmost to give effect to this policy of disarmament. Effective disarmament and the establishment of world peace by the ending of national wars depend ultimately on the removal of the causes of wars and national conflicts. These causes must be rooted out by the ending of the domination of one country over another and the exploitation of one people or group by another. To that end India will peacefully labour and it is with this objective in view that the people of India desire to attain the status of a free and independent nation. Such freedom will be the prelude to the close association with other countries within a comity of free nations for the peace and progress of the world." Many doubted the practicality of Gandhi's ideals in the actual world. Still they accepted those ideals because they represented something authentic deep down in the depth of their own souls.

Nehru states: "Always there has been that inner conflict within him and in our national politics, between Gandhi as a national leader and Gandhi as a man with a prophetic message, which was not confined to India but was for humanity and the world. It is never easy to reconcile a strict adherence to truth as one sees it, with the exigencies and expediencies of life, and especially of political life. Normally people do not even worry themselves over this problem. They keep truth apart in some corner of their minds, if they keep it at all anywhere, and accept expediency as the measure of action." Leaders are philosophical

strategists and strike a compromise between truth and men's receptivity to it. As Nehru states quoting Liddel Hart, "The prophets must be stoned; that is their lot, and the test of their self-fulfillment. But a leader who is stoned may merely prove that he has failed in his function through a deficiency of wisdom, or through confusing his function with that of a prophet."¹¹ Where the two actually meet is in the common desire to realize in given situation God's intention for all creation: peace, justice, love, freedom, wholeness and fullness of life for all. Inculturation is a dialectical encounter between an existing way of doing things and the new insights brought in by a prophet by his living faith. Socrates was a prophet forthright in accusing the corrupt Athenian society and declaring that it is far better to suffer injustice than to inflict it in any way on others. He had to pay for his convictions with his own life. Aristotle, on the other hand, held that it is better that neither others nor yourself should suffer injustice, and that in most cases one could not obtain absolute certainty but only probability. He proposed a politics based on *arête*, virtue, quality of the noble man. These represent the two poles of religion and culture.

As Martin Buber explains there are two types of faith, one that is based in a spontaneous and blind acceptance of certain absolute values or truths and the other complete trust in and surrender to a Person.¹² For limited human consciousness it is not possible to jump to a position of identity with infinite and immutable consciousness and view all things through that consciousness. Whether it is seen as being, good and truth or as consciousness shining by itself, both will be a mere projection of the finite into the Infinite. On the other hand, when a finite being that sees itself as an image, reflection or shadow of the Infinite wants to surrender itself to the Infinite, its supposed starting point is the "story" of its emergence once upon a time, *in illo tempore* from that Infinite. "That is fullness out there; there is fullness down here; this fullness is derived from That Fullness, and even after drawing out this fullness from that fullness, That Fullness remains undiminished." The "story" is within the divinity itself, Good diffusive of itself, Truth emerging as the eternal Word, Love as total self-gift.

That is why the classical religious texts are said to have always an excess meaning, that is, they mean more than what they actually meant.¹³ Here the meeting together of different religions in a given context can

lead to mutual enrichment and to an exploration of the excess meaning of each of them. The inner story of the divinity is continued in history in the Incarnation of the Son of God as Jesus of Nazareth, in each avatar of Vishnu, in the illumination of Buddha, and in the revelation of the Qur'an to Mohammed. Each cultural expression of any faith should be profoundly unique, while remaining bonded in unity with all other expressions. Unity is better realized by diversity than mere uniformity. While the different cultural expressions each in its uniqueness remains the common heritage of all, what binds them is much stronger than what divides them.

The values of God's reign should be reflected in the very process of inculcation. Rather than being directed primarily to a better understanding of God, it oriented to a better treatment of human beings. In the Axial Period between 900 and 200 B.C, when metaphysical thinking first emerged in the world religions were divided against each other in terms of their understanding of the Deity. Some asked "What is God?" and came up with the answer "God is Supreme Being"; some others asked "Who is the One behind the creation of heaven and earth?" and put the answer in Yaheh's mouth "I am who I am", the one faithful to my promise. Over against these Greek and Hebrew answers the Easterns asked "Whence is the origin, sustenance and dissolution of all things?" and answered, "the Infinite, Immutable Consciousness!" But these questions and answers could never exhaust the divinity. They are all right and yet inadequate. Putting them all together would not be any better than the composite picture of an elephant created by a bunch of blind men.

Today the religious problem is oriented to man: How to find stability and peace in this world of flux? How come there is evil in a world created by a good and all-powerful God? What is the source and meaning of human suffering? Hence the value of religion should be seen in making human culture hospitable to all God's children, to make this world a better place for all. Religion is the matter of the ultimate concern of humans. All religions address the existential questions of human life: What is its origin? Whither is it going? What is the meaning and relevance of human suffering? What is the nature of life after death? The answers given by the different religions may be culturally

conditioned. But whatever be the culture, religion and faith have the last word to tell people what to believe, and how to live.

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Foot Notes

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Religion and the Culture of Peace

M.S. John

Introduction

When Islamic terrorists destroyed the World Trade Centre in New York on the 11th of September this year in a suicide attack, many commentators have once again started discussing the theme of “clash of civilisations” which, it is claimed, represents the type of conflicts that we are going to witness in the twenty first century. Samuel P. Huntington who enunciated this idea argued that Western Christian cultures are threatened by Islamic and Confucian ones. He saw culture as an independent variable with potential to stir conflicts. To him the embeddedness of nations in civilisations is the most important determinant of world politics in the twenty first century and the pivotal characteristic of each civilisation is the religion or cosmology on which it is based.¹ Even those who refuse to accord religion the status of an independent variable acknowledge its instrumental value in the modern world. There is a general consensus that a long-term strategy for achieving peace should be undertaken at the cultural level itself, and sensing this the United Nations, particularly the UNESCO, has been trying to promote a culture of peace and has invested considerable human and material resources in this direction.

Like any other social science concept, there is no conceptual consensus as to what constitutes culture and what sort of peace culture is to be fostered. In these days of postmodernism notion of a culture of peace presented in universalising terminologies may be suspect. Since cultures are particular entities, it may be more appropriate to think in terms of cultures of peace. This means that a culture of peace has to evolve in an endogenous manner without being imposed from outside. While it is necessary to think in terms of a culture of peace within

societies, we also have to think of peace between cultures. However, one may have to admit that there is a relationship between the intra-cultural dimension of peace and its external manifestations or implications.

Meaning of Concepts

There are three concepts that we have to deal with in this paper- religion, culture, and peace. I shall first turn to religion. Religion can be understood as a system of rules and allied practices such as rituals and symbols, which rationalise human existence, provide identity, define 'self' and its relation to the 'other' and condition human behaviour. Those who accept these rules internalise them on faith, which in most cases presuppose the existence of God. Nearly a century ago, Emile Durkheim said: "A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden- beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called church, all those who adhere to them"². In a recent book Ninian Smart talks about seven dimensions of the sacred. They are doctrinal, ritual, mythic or narrative, experiential and emotional, ethical and legal, social and material.³ Although he does not define religion as such the constitutive elements that he identifies contain the main characteristic features of religions.

What is peace?. This has often been a contested question. Those who are more concerned with the scientific character of the discipline of peace studies would say that we should confine ourselves to a definition that is more restrictive. For them it is the absence of violence, especially large scale violence like war⁴. Some of them among them would go a step further and bring all war making institutions or threat systems within its purview⁵. There is a more expanded notion of peace, which appears more meaningful particularly from the point of view of the developing world. While admitting that peace is the absence of violence, the meaning of violence is expanded to take into consideration not only personal violence where there is an identifiable actor, but also structural violence which is silent but more enduring. Here violence is seen as the denial of a person's right to development, both somatically and mentally⁶. More recently another form of violence also has been introduced- cultural violence. This means the existence of beliefs and

attitudes which legitimate violence and allow it to persist. Galtung says that “cultural violence makes direct and structural violence look, even feel, right - or at least not wrong”⁷. Cultural violence is perhaps more nuanced than structural in that it is within all of us unlike structures which are largely external to us. For example, boys are raised in cultures which envision them as the defenders of their families and womenfolk. Women in turn are expected to wallow in the security that men provide. One may also add violence against the environment to these categories. In this view human beings are seen as one of many species inhabiting the earth, and the fate of the planet is seen as the most important goal. The idea that we are all interdependent and related to one another also is central to the concept of peace. Peace demands that we respect earth and all forms of life, especially human life and evolve attitudes and practices which reinforce this respect.

There are both narrow and broad definitions of culture. Narrow definitions focus on the arts—including literature, poetry, music, theatre, painting, dance, etc. Broader definitions—which are used in Anthropology—include all our socially-learned behaviour as reflected in technology/tools, social organizations (including economic, political, social, religious, educational, family, and other organizations) and ideas/beliefs. The key point is that culture is not innate, but learned and is transmitted from one generation to generation⁸. Culture is also shared by a group of people together, and all the different aspects of one’s culture must somehow converge into a pattern. There are also some who look at deeper, hidden levels of meaning, in addition to the apparent. For our purpose culture may be defined as common symbols, rituals and characterisations such as heroism shared by a group of people based on a set of values and underlying assumptions about reality. By peace Culture we mean the existence of a number of attributes that enable peaceable behaviour to take place in the society. These attributes include identities, attitudes, values, beliefs and institutional patterns that lead people to live in a connected and nurturing manner with fellow humans and also with nature. It is said that human beings have basic urge for human bonding and separation, of coming together and autonomy. How these seemingly contradictory urges balance has implications for peace⁹.

Religion in the Contemporary World.

The modernist project sought to privatise and marginalise religious and cultural pluralism and in a way also sought to overcome it in its quest to create an ethic of cosmopolitanism. Dissatisfaction with the post-colonial secular state and conflict between religious and secular nationalism were important developments in many Third World countries in the 1990s. The political resurgence of religious communities is accompanied by violent clashes in and between nations. Algeria, Bosnia, Northern Ireland, Kashmir, Nigeria, Palestine, Sri Lanka etc., are some of the many examples. Religion is an inalienable part of most cultures and in some cultures they are inseparable and indistinguishable.

Often religious groups are known for their power to generate conflict and violence. This is clear from the ferocity of the conflict in the Balkans and Northern Ireland, to cite two examples. Although the scriptures of most world religions speak of peace, a lot of violence is still committed in the name of religion. Gods are terrorising, says Mark Jurgensmeyer¹⁰. In the wars that plagued Europe between 1560 and 1650 religion was “the burning motivation, the one that inspired fanatical devotion and the most vicious hatred”.¹¹ Acts of violence require legitimisation, which is provided by religion and religious leaders. Interpretations of the scriptures often takes place introducing notions like just and holy wars. The global resurgence of religion is a part of the larger crisis of modernity, which reduced the world to what can be perceived or controlled through reason, science and technology, technical and bureaucratic rationality and leaves out the spiritual. It is also the result of the failure of the state to produce development and democracy. That religion can transform society, polity and culture is widely recognised, particularly the role of diffuse set of religious values in a society that could have peace-prone consequences. For example it has been claimed that wide diffusion of Christian values in South Africa had a contributory, though not decisive, role in ending apartheid. This is not to detach the ideals of religions from the institutions and individuals who represent it. Religions and their representatives can often play crucial role in conflict prevention and resolution, particularly because they have strong linkages at the grass roots level and are generally having contacts with governments.¹² The recent emphasis on multi-track diplomacy in peace work has also emphasised the role that religious groups can play¹³.

Duality of Cultures within religions

Religious cultures are not by definition peace cultures. It can be argued that each religion has two cultures- one based on a vision of warrior God out there to punish the erring infidels and the other that of a loving creator that underscores the interconnectedness of human beings and also all living things.¹⁴ The existence of the male warrior god implied the subjection of women and children. The prototype of such a family order sanctioned by religion often bestowed upon the male the divine legitimation to oppress the women and children. This institutionalisation of masculinity in the family has weakened the persuasiveness of the peace ideals enshrined in most world religions. In spite of these there are references in the scriptures of most world religions to non-violence as representing a higher way. There are people like Gandhi and the Dalai Lama etc., who consider spirituality and the building up of a culture of peace inter-related. However, all theorists of non-violence do not draw their inspiration from religion¹⁵.

Johan Galtung, eminent peace researcher speaks of hard and soft dimensions of religion. In its soft form, resident in its inner concentric circle, religion is warm, compassionate, “reaching out horizontally to everybody, to all life, to the whole world without ifs and buts, reservations and exceptions.”. It is for us to emphasize and create ideologies that are both soft, uniting, peaceful, world-encompassing, yet pluralist, says Galtung. He says that cooperation among those who identify themselves with the soft, non-dividing aspects of religion and belittle or de-emphasize the harder aspects may be necessary. Such people can be found in all religions. Since by definition the union in or through God is basic to their orientation, the idiom, the concrete religious discourse in itself does not generate controversies. What matters is what we all have in common. “To seek together, standing up for the softer aspects, is religious practice, changing thought into action.” Galtung feels that the main theological dialogue between hard and soft has to be carried out within each religion and the emphasis should be on how religious messages can be presented and understood in a way that makes them maximally peace-creating.¹⁶ Elise Boulding believes that image of the future should become inclusive of the traditions and perceptions of people from other parts of the world. There is a need to engage in

“cross-cultural imaging” and learn about views and values of the “South”¹⁷.

All over the world there are spiritually based groups belonging to the world’s religious traditions who are working for peace. Groups like *Pax Christi* or the Buddhist Peace Fellowship draw their inspiration for peace work from the Christian and Buddhist religious traditions respectively. However, there are also interdenominational and inter-religious peace organisations like the International Fellowship of Reconciliation which works across religious traditions. In both cases, non-violent religious groups base their work for peace on spiritual principles. Religion served as a major force in the struggle against totalitarianism and injustice as evidenced from the experience of countries like Iran, Poland, Philippines and East Timor. Much attention is given in peace research to the role of religion and religious groups in conflict, particularly ethnic conflict where leaders from different religious backgrounds often use religion as a basis for war. Far less attention has been given to the moderating influence of religions and religious peace groups in controlling war.

Congruity between Peace Cultures and Peace Concepts.

What is meant by a culture of peace will almost certainly vary according to the concept of peace that is used. If peace is interpreted in the minimalist sense to denote absence of war between and within states, then a culture of peace would be a culture that made war between or within states increasingly unlikely. Such a culture of peace has been hallmark of Western liberal states for quite some time. This has prompted some commentators to look upon the peace potential of liberal democracies and to come up with the thesis that democracy and peace are inter-related¹⁸. However, the same is not true within states, particularly where culturally distinct nations or ethnic groups are concerned.

If we turn to a culture of peace focusing on the issue of structural violence, then the world picture is less sanguine, although not hopeless. At the non-governmental level, there are many international citizens’ groups who struggle to create the economic, social and political context to overcome the harshest manifestations of structural violence, namely poverty, starvation and preventable disease. While global economic and

political structures of the world continue to contribute substantially to global structural violence through the activities of multinational and transnational corporations and the inequitable international economic system, it has to be recognized that a number of private enterprises, and thousands of similar smaller groups, work to overcome "structural violence" using economic, social and political approaches. However, a lot more needs to be done on this front¹⁹.

If the concept 'culture of peace' is interpreted in the feminist framework, then the cultural and social conditions necessary for peace is lacking literally in every country. The physical and structural violence taking place at the micro level, in the community and family, on the streets and in the schools, is widespread. The cultural, social, political and economic changes necessary to create a feminist culture of peace represent a major challenge and this includes also reordering the culture of institutions, including many religious institutions. The feminist approach rooted in personal experience is based on how peace is felt by individuals in their day to day life. A feminist culture of peace, based on personal, experiential analyses, requires fundamental changes in societal values. Issues such as domestic violence and child abuse, which have often been highlighted by feminist scholars, will require similar fundamental changes in cultural values. While much feminist scholarship has stressed physical violence like wife beating, there has also been a focus on the pervasive effects of patriarchal structures. As a consequence, feminist conceptions of a culture of peace will also require system wide changes in personal cultural values.²⁰

A holistic Gaia-peace interpretation of a culture of peace presents an even broader set of concerns that need to be addressed. Whereas the environment was seen in Western civilisation as a resource to exploit, it is now seen as connected to us. The extension of outer peace to include peace with the environment represents an important and necessary stage in the evolution of the peace concept. The shift in values towards a concern for peace with the environment has not picked up momentum, but there is at least greater receptivity to environmental concerns than ever. Groff and Smoker say that "green peace has become more than the name of an important environmental pressure group, and there is now widespread verbal recognition of the need to live in harmony with the environment-a need that for some may be purely functional, but

which for many if not most, is based on a vision of planet earth as sacred".²¹

The emergence of holistic peace paradigms in peace research, either spiritual and/or environmental, has included an increasing emphasis on positive conceptions of peace. This is based on the notion that we are all interconnected and interdependent. Viewed from space, we cannot see national boundaries, but we can see the land and the water, ice caps, deserts and forests. We as individuals and groups are but a part of the planet, as the planet itself is a part of the solar system, galaxy and universe. The new thinking, "represents a return to wholeness, not in the sense of uniformity, but in the sense of complexity dynamically balanced in interaction, the whole as integrated synergy". This mindset, says Groff and Smoker, "enables an appreciation of the interdependence of species in the global ecosystem, of particular cultural meanings in the context of the total global cultural system, and of particular faiths in the rich diversity of global religions. The whole is more than the sum of the parts, and the greater the variety of the parts, the richer the expression of the global whole"²².

From Concept of Peace to a Culture of Peace

In a recent book Elise Boulding has shown the hidden side of history, of peace cultures where people's resistance to oppressive institutions and their persistent experiments with peaceable living arrangements remain in spite of the violence that is around us. She says that these cultures "can help us move away from global destruction and toward a world alive with a great diversity of peaceable life ways. The very ability to imagine something different and better than what currently exists is critical for the possibility of social change." Boulding connects structural violence to institutional patterns of behaviour. The patterns are enshrined in outmoded patriarchal structures. She looks closely at development, ecological degradation, corporations, modern technology, capitalism, and militarism. She believes a possible future for society resides in our human capacity for learning and evolving, for imagining and shifting reality. She offers possibilities for the transformation of our war culture into "an interconnected localist world of adventurous but peaceful problem-solvers."²³

Socialization is the process through which culture is learned, including our religious beliefs and practices, and the agents of socialization include language, politics, economics, religion, education, family, and media. Culture under this view provides the medium through which we interpret the world, context of meanings, small and large, that makes coherence possible. A culture of peace, therefore, would be a culture that makes peace possible. Peace culture cannot be promoted through institutions and structures which are characterised by authoritarian elements. In other words, it calls for reshaping the numerous institutions through which socialisation takes place so that peace values are embedded in their very organisational culture.

Holistic Culture of Peace

The concept of a holistic culture of peace represents a shift from the secular towards the spiritual peace paradigms, a realization that inner peace and outer peace—spiritual and material—are interconnected and interdependent. It is here that the contributions of the world's religious and spiritual traditions can contribute to our understanding. The idea that outer peace is in some way a representation or image of inner world of spiritual peace, may be of particular importance in the creation of a holistic, inner and outer global culture of peace. The variety and diversity of religious life, would then provide a dynamic link between the inner and outer worlds, such that inner-outer peace would be manifest in all aspects of a culture of peace—including macro and micro social and economic institutions, local and global values, art, literature, music, technology, meditation and prayer. The resulting culture of peace would display a Gaia-like global pattern, where the interacting local cultures are manifestations of the inner unity and outer diversity principle spread throughout the whole system. Whereas Western definitions of reality concentrated on the material world, particularly economic, military and political questions, “reality” under a holistic peace paradigm includes both material and spiritual components. A holistic culture of peace (balancing inner and outer, feminine and masculine, material and spiritual) will lead to a completely different outcome to peace theories that concentrate on changing the outer world, but do not balance such concerns with a parallel and interdependent exploration of the inner.²⁴

It may be interesting to note that inner peace is more developed in the Eastern traditions (Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism) than in the West where more attention is paid to outer peace. However both are necessary for a comprehensive vision of peace culture. According to Groff and Smoker, "if one tries to achieve outer peace in the world only, but does not deal with inner peace, then one's inner conflicts can be projected out onto the world, making it difficult to achieve outer peace—the supposed goal. Likewise, if one tries to achieve inner peace only, but does not pay attention to creating outer peace in the world, then the social injustices and structural violence in the world will make it more difficult for most people experiencing those conditions to be able to find inner peace—the supposed goal. Thus the achievement of either inner or outer peace helps create the conditions necessary for the creation of the other type of peace".²⁵ One remarkable feature of the Gandhian project was to combine these two aspects. He drew inspiration from a deep spiritual calling and at the same embarked upon struggles for justice, which suggest civic engagement rather than renunciation. The idea of living in harmony with nature also is less visible in the Western traditions.

Elements of a Culture of Peace

What then would be the contours of a culture of peace? Power should be redefined not in terms of violence or force, but active non-violence as a means of social change, buttressed by the numerous successes it registered in the twentieth century.²⁶ Hence the role of non-violent social movements in engendering a culture of peace is essential. People should be mobilised not to defeat the enemy but to build understanding and tolerance. Instead of cultures of hierarchy we need more participatory types of organisation. Secrecy of information often leads to exploitation and corruption. Hence there should be free flow of information. Patriarchy should be replaced by more power-sharing models of social organisation at all levels, especially more caring and nurturing forms. Cooperation and sustainable development should be emphasised as opposed to exploitation. For a peace culture we have to transcend dualistic forms of discourse and binary codings which create polarized and stereotyped understandings of "them" and "us". It also entails retrieving subjugated knowledge and ways of life that can serve as models for a peace culture such as those of women and the

indigenous peoples. Replacing violent, sexist and racist language and imagery with non-gendered, non-racist, non-violent alternatives also becomes necessary. We also may have to encourage human spiritual growth and self-understanding and create an awareness of human connectedness and common bonds between the people and the environment. This is not to say that structural reforms are out of place. We have to rethink traditional institutions of socialisation such as family and especially their relationship promoting masculine values. The public sphere especially the media may have to be made accessible to the excluded and subjugated knowledge. Journalistic values which lay high premium on reporting violence may have to change.

The importance of a dialogue strategy in promoting a culture of peace is increasingly recognised. This calls for inter-civilisational dialogue, not clash of civilisations.²⁷ Ordinary people who are illiterate in religious terms can be easily manipulated, which needs to be remedied. Established religious authorities can denounce the framing of a given conflict as a dispute of faith. Redirecting the willingness of the faithful to fight injustice by resorting to non-violent modes of protest as Gandhi, Martin Luther King, the Dalai Lama, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and so on had done could be best undertaken by religious leaders. Because of the respect that they enjoy in their communities and the society in general, religious leaders can help develop mutual trust and persuade all sides to honour fundamental religious values. They can reopen channels of communication, provide conference forums and evolve face-saving formulas for conflict settlement. But if such efforts are not reciprocated by the other communities in multi-ethnic contexts, their efforts would appear foolish.

Conclusion

While it is true that religion is not the sole remedy for the ills of the world, it has a critical role to play. Given the cultural and religious diversity of the world, unless we recognise pluralism and respect diversity, peace may be beyond reach. What is required is “deep pluralism” as against limited religious pluralism that currently exists. Culture is a way of seeing the world and living in it. It also means the cultivation of those values and forms of life which reflect the worldviews of each culture. Therefore neither the meaning of peace nor of religion

can be reduced to a single and rigid concept, just as the range of human experience cannot be conveyed by a single language. For some cultures, religion is a way of life, permeating every human activity. For others it represents the highest aspirations of human existence. In still others, religions are institutions that claim to carry a message of salvation. The importance of religion is now recognised even in international relations as evident from the aftermath of the destruction of the World Trade Centre. Scott M. Thomas says, "A time may be coming when the absence of religion and theology from international relations will begin to look as bizarre a detour as the absence of normative theory from the discipline"²⁸. Religions should uncover their more fundamental and humane aspects which allowed them to survive in spite of these several vicissitudes. Often the secularist humane project finds itself lacking due to its inability to go deeper and touch the inner depths of a person's life. It is this gap that religion should fill. This calls for a strategy of religious social engagement , a redefinition of the role of religion and a deployment of its spiritual and material resources for the cause of peace.

The Meeting on "The Contribution by Religions to the Culture of Peace", organised by UNESCO in Barcelona from 12 to 18 December 1994, declared : "Grounded in our faith, we will build a culture of peace based on non-violence, tolerance, dialogue, mutual understanding, and justice. We call upon the institutions of our civil society, the United Nations system, governments, governmental and non-governmental organisations, corporations, and the mass media, to strengthen their commitments to peace and to listen to the cries of the victims and the dispossessed. We call upon the different religious and cultural traditions to join hands together in this effort, and to cooperate with us in spreading the message of peace".²⁹ I will only add that in the post-secular era if religion fails to play its due role , it will face the same fate as secular modernity.

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Foot Notes

- ¹ Samuel P. Huntington, 1997. *The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order*, London: Simon and Schuster.
- ² Emile Durkheim, 1915. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, London: Allen and Unwin, p. 47.
- ³ By doctrinal dimension, Smart means scriptures which mediate between immanence and transcendence. Ritual dimensions mean those practices confirming faith directed at a superior being or for freeing oneself from some kind of entrapment. The mythic or narrative dimension means those founding stories about the creation of a community, the immortality and timelessness of God and so on. The experiential and emotional dimensions include revelations, miracles and wonders showing the power of God, especially through intermediaries. The ethical and legal aspect corresponds to the laws and type of behaviour suggested in the scriptures. Religion also has social dimension since it is practised in communion and this also meets the identity needs of the community of followers. Material dimensions of religion include representations of the Divine through icons, relics etc., For details see Ninian Smart, 1996. *Dimensions of the Sacred: An Anatomy of the World's Beliefs*, London: Fontana Press.
- ⁴ See for example Michael Howard, 1983. "The Concept of Peace", *Encounter*, 61, December. See also Raymond Aron, 1966. *Peace and War: A Theory of International Relations*, London: Weider and Nicholson,.
- ⁵ Kenneth E. Boulding, 1978. *Stable Peace*, Austin, Texas, University of Texas Press.
- ⁶ Johan Galtung, 1982. "Violence, Peace and Peace Research", *Contemporary Peace Research*, New Delhi: Radiant Publishers, , p.95
- ⁷ Johan Galtung, 1996, *Peace by Peaceful Means*, London: Sage, p.196.
- ⁸ Linda Groff and Paul Smoker, "Creating Global-Local Cultures of Peace", see <http://www.gmu.edu/academic/pcs/smoker.htm>.
- ⁹ Elise Boulding, 1999. "Peace Culture" in Lester Kurtz ed. *Encyclopaedia of Violence, Peace, and Conflict*, San Diego, Academic Press, Vol. 2, p.654.
- ¹⁰ Mark Jurgensmeyer, 2000. *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, Berkley, Ca: University of California Press.
- ¹¹ Robert Scott Appleby, 1999. *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence and Reconciliation*, Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, p.2.
- ¹² *Ibid.*
- ¹³ Track Two or "citizen diplomacy" is a non-governmental, informal, and unofficial form of conflict resolution between citizen groups which is aimed at de-escalating conflict by reducing anger, fear, and tension and by improving communication and mutual understanding. Track Two diplomatic efforts need not be thought of as a replacement for Track One efforts, but rather as an indispens-

sable preparation for and adjunct to them. Ideally, Track Two diplomatic efforts should pave the way for Track One negotiations and agreements by encouraging Track One official diplomats to recognise and utilise crucial information and insights obtained by Track Two citizen diplomats. See John W. McDonald, 1991. "Further Exploration of Track Two Diplomacy," in Louis Kriesberg & Stuart J. Thorson (eds.) *Timing the De-Escalation of International Conflicts*, Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, pp. 201-220.

¹⁴ Elise Boulding, 1999, *op.cit.*, p. 657.

¹⁵ For example see Gene Sharp, 1973. *The Politics of Non-violent Action*, Boston: Porter Sargent , for an exclusively strategic application of non-violence.

¹⁶ Johan Galtung , "Religions : Hard and Soft", <http://www.anil.org/Galtung.htm>

¹⁷ Elise Boulding,. 1991. "The Challenge of Imaging Peace in Wartime". *Conflict Resolution Notes*. Vol. 8, No. 4 , April, p. 36.

¹⁸ Nils Petter Gleditsch, 1999. "Democracy and Peace" in Lester Kurtz ed. *Encyclopaedia of Violence, Peace, and Conflict*, San Diego, Academic Press, Vol. 2, pp. 643-652.

¹⁹ Linda Groff and Paul Smoker, "Creating Global-Local Cultures of Peace", see <http://www.gmu.edu/academic/pcs/smoker.htm>.

²⁰ See Birgit Brock-Utne, 1989. *Feminist Perspectives on Peace and Peace Education*, New York: Pergamon.

²¹ Groff and Smoker, "Creating Global-Local Cultures of Peace", *op.cit.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Elise Boulding, 2000. *Cultures of Peace: The Hidden Side of History*, Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

²⁴ Linda Groff and Paul Smoker, 1999. "Inner-Outer Dimensions of Religion and Peace, Lester Kurtz ed. *Encyclopaedia of Violence, Peace, and Conflict*, San Diego, Academic Press, Vol. 3, pp.217-228.

²⁵ Linda Groff and Paul Smoker, "Creating Global-Local Cultures of Peace", *op.cit*

²⁶ The shift in emphasis from the traditional violence-based "power over" to its more creative forms like "power to act in concert" or "power with", which often find resonance in non-violent social movements and in the writings of many feminists is contemplated here. See for example Hanna Arendt, 1972. *Crises of the Republic*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

²⁷ Bassam Tibi, 2000. "Post Bi-Polar Order in Crisis: The Challenge of Political Islam", *Millennium*, 29, 3, , p. 859.

²⁸ Scott M. Thomas, 2000. "Taking Religious and Cultural Pluralism Seriously: The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Society", *Millennium*, 29. 3, , p.839

²⁹ UNESCO, 1995. *Declaration on the Role of Religion in the Promotion of a Culture of Peace*. Barcelona, Spain: Centre UNESCO de Catalunya.

Statement of the Seminar on Religion and Culture

We the participants in the National Seminar jointly organized by Jeevadhara Centre for Socio-Religious Research and the School of Social Sciences of Mahatma Gandhi University, September 14-16, 2001 reflected on the various issues arising from the relationship between religion and culture. First of all we note that from an outsider's point of view most major religions emerged as counter-cultures criticizing oppressive aspects of certain religions. Thus in India the Upanishadic religion originated with the challenge of the Kshatriyas against the hegemony of the Brahmins in their claim to the surplus income of the agriculturists under the pretext of controlling the productivity of the land through their sacrifices. Buddhism and Jainism were religions that represented the protest of the Vaisyas against the dominance of the Brahmins and Kshatriyas. These new religious movements, however, in their turn re-appropriated the structures of the religions they had replaced. Judaism, Christianity and Islam also arose in reaction to the domination of foreign cultures, had their doctrines imported to their initiates, but eventually claimed a right to impose the same doctrines on everyone even with militant means. So in comparing religions one has to take into account the common social structures they share and the new insights introduced by each one into the one religious history of humanity.

We feel that culture and religion should be taken in a holistic sense. Instead of being imposed from the outside and being modified by external influences, culture should be seen as the totality of our humanness, the single whole-system in which we are born and brought up, which should be fostered in its integrity, comprising factors usually called physical,

social, racial, spiritual and religious. Human culture is such a wholeness that nothing 'human' could be totally alien to it. Similarly a holistically religious person experiences God as the ultimate Spirit-Power that permeates the entire life and culture. In the face, however, of ethnocentrism and particularist nationalism one should be careful to evaluate a culture first in terms of its own values, goals and focuses, before venturing to compare it with any other culture. Every culture embodies a certain world view central to the systematization of conceptions of realities related to a particular society. This world view has an explanatory, evaluative, integrating and adaptable function.

The British colonial policy was to equate culture and religion and see India as a society composed of many separate cultural-religious communities, which could never become a single nation. The classical, liberal democratic theory, on the other hand, worked with the conception of a society composed of individuals whose religious and cultural affiliations would not get recognition in the public sphere of the state. In the early years after the Indian independence the constituent assembly worked with the Nehruvian vision of a secular, casteless egalitarian society. The view that Hinduism or Hindutva constitutes the unifying cultural identity of the nation came up as an alternative conception. The notion of the organically integrated and bounded religious cultural community arose to describe and define minority communities. Linguistic creativity served as a tool to create a sense of cultural identity in states like Kerala and Bengal. A contemporary neo-Gandhian group has to mediate between the secularist view about public culture and the collective identities created by religious values. This cultural nationalist perspective unites religion and culture and nationalism. They favour Gandhi's radical interpretation of Hinduism as an alternative way of organizing the Public sphere. No one can deny the fact that Indian society remains one of different, bounded, cultural-religious communities interacting with each other.

Religion is the most dynamic motivating force in human life, and it is a process than a ready-made product. But one has to remember that history abundantly proves that various cultural forces, social and political,

can distort religion into a tool of aggression and oppression. Most religions at one time or other in its history have been militant and felt that they were authorized by God to impose their doctrines and structures by militant means. India in its struggle for independence and after gaining independence has shown the balance and synthesis between the prophetism of religion and the accommodative wisdom of enlightened leadership. Mahatma Gandhi with his strict adherence to non-violence paid for his beliefs by his life. Pandit Jawharlal Nehru, Vallabhai Patel and other leaders wielded the wisdom of the possible and showed that cultural realities should provide the actualization of deep religious faith.

An important aspect of the relation between religion and culture is their impact on development. So far development was calculated in terms of economic growth, production and consumption of material goods. Since 1972 there is a growing realization that mere production and consumption of material goods can lead only to the depletion of the limited resources of the earth. Greater emphasis is has to be placed on the protection of ecology to make it hospitable to all people and greater importance given to human development.

Today the world is realizing that humanity can survive only by creating and preserving peace. Unequal development naturally leads to conflict. Some say that today culture is under threat both from Islamic fundamentalism and even the Chinese Confucian religious outlook. But peace has to be achieved at the cultural level by the common perception of danger to the whole humanity. Peace is not merely the absence of external violence; it requires also the elimination of structural violence. For this the concerted effort of religions and even voluntary movements like Green Peace have great importance.

India was engaged in the inculcation of religion long before independence. Raja Rammohan Roy, Kesub Chunder Sen and Brahmapandhab Upadhyaya sought to emphasize the genuine identity of Indian culture, at the same time welcoming whatever was good in foreign cultural contributions. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa and Sri Vivekananda toured the length and breadth of the country to learn the cultural mood of the people and to imbibe the religious faith and cultural

spirit of the whole world. In communicating the faith to a people we are making the presence of God become incarnate in the living culture of the people. Both avatar and incarnation have the scope of making God's saving presence actually felt. For Christians it is the question of making the Paschal mystery available to all humans. For this inculcation of faith a good few practical steps are necessary. One has to explore God's presence in our land, discern the divinely inspired character of its Scriptures, and recognize the holiness of its rishis, sages and saints to whatever religion they may belong. One has to note the genuine goodness of people, compassion and justice found in people of all religious persuasions. There is need to acknowledge the equality of humans, rejecting titles and positions of honour and privilege. Above all there is need of a committed action for peace.

Book Reviews

INDIAN INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLE, ed, **Augustine Thottakara** CMI, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2000, pp.491, Rs. 350.

This is a Festschrift in honour of Prof. Joseph Pathrapankal on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of his religious commitment and the seventieth birthday. Father Pathrapankal has spent the whole of his academic life teaching Sacred Scripture to generations of Catholic seminarians and interpreting the message of the New Testament to the general public. He has endeavoured to make the Bible relevant to the Indian context taking into account its religious traditions focused on the holy books of Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam. The twentyone friends, colleagues and students of Pathrapankal, who contributed to this book emphasize different aspects of this relevance.

Archbishop Alphones Mathias in a foreword states the question: To what extent is the salvific Word of God revealed in the holy scriptures inclusive and / or exclusive of the primeval revelation handed down by generations of human kind as expressed through the religious, philosophical, cultural and historical evolution of people, and how does it synchronize and synthesize with God's plans of universal salvation in and through Christ? Thus inculcation through which the message of salvation is made incarnate in the specific and living cultures off the people is the primary scope of the book.

But Scripture is taught in seminaries to Christian believers and hence the traditional method is to treat it as a collection of programmes, relevant

anywhere to help people live according to God's commands, reaffirmed by Jesus Christ. As Paul Kalluveetil explains examining the major books of Pathrapankal, his main work was to outline and provide such programmes for Christian life from the New Testament books. IN MEWTANOIA, Faith, Covenant, he explained 'metanoia' as human return to the covenant existence after their turning away from the covenant fidelity. In "Christian Life: NT Perspectives" how "evolves a comprehensive programme for Christian life in our times of religious pluralism." "Critical and Creative" discusses fourteen topics for human life in the existential context of India. He expressess himself strongly against any general, time-and-space transcending interpretation simply to be applied to given situations. In "Text and Context he restricts the Christian programme to a "broad-based approach to all other religions through which it can impart the doctrine of the universal fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of human kind." His "Christian Programme" restricts discipleship to a dharma" of freedom, relationship, altruism and radical trust in God."

Most of the papers follow the same method and discuss practical questions such as using the Mimamsaka principles of hermeneutics to find out the exact meaning of Scriptural statements (Manickam), the relation between the Jewish culture of Christian scriptures and the Indian culture (Pandiappally), Christian and Indian ideas of God (Koroth), and the parallelism between Christ, the Word of God and the place of Vak in Hindu Scriptures (Edanad). But today the crucial question is the mostly unexpressed but clearly evident radical opposition between West and East in presenting the Gospel of Jesus: West wants to emphasize the divinity of Christ and the divine authority with which he imposes the moral teachings of his Gospel on all, while Christians in the East present the core of the Gospel as a triple dialogue, with the poor, with the traditional religions and with the cultures. One cannot say that Christ's moral teachings which takes over a great deal of Old Testament morality are the best possible ones. On the other hand he is constantly emphasizing the dignity and self-esteem of the poor as heirs of God's Kingdom, he is in critical dialogue with Judaism, and other religions of the day and preaches a culture of the Kingdom over against the Judaic and Graeco-

Roman cultures. Some of the papers do slightly touch these issues like Susaimanckam's "A Dalit Reading of the Book of Job", Kaniarakath's "Dalit Reading of the Prophets", Legrand's "Jesus' Nativity and Politics" and Theckanath's "Reflections on the Proclamation of Christ in Asia". Since the contributors are rarely representative of Scripture teachers in our seminaries the book is an indication of the inadequacy of the present discussion of the central texts of Christianity. The scope of inculturating Christian Scripture in Asian context cannot be achieved unless it is shown that the person of Christ presented in Scripture unites in himself the triple dialogue with humanity!

ASIAN DREAMS AND CHRISTIAN HOPE AT THE DAWN OF THE THIRD MILLENNIUM, **Felix Wilfred**, Delhi: ISPCK, 2000, pp xxvi, 312, Rs. 35

The book has four parts, the first three dealing with the problem of globalization, the rights of the subalterns, and Christian dialogue with the Asian civil society, and the fourth providing a methodological framework for theological discussion of the issues. From a theological point of view one should perhaps expect to begin with the fourth part. But instead of exploring the data of divine revelation it presents a hermeneutical approach using the human sciences. Besides true to the method of Liberation Theology Wilfred starts from below from the groans of victims of oppression and exploitation. Globalization is a grand deception providing the illusion of unity and appearance of growth with plenty of programmes of cover-up, corporations of deception, forced consensus and fraudulent trade. Catholic Church is actually playing into the hands of the forces of globalization, for example, by taking away personnel badly needed in the Indian villages to serve people in the affluent countries of the West. If there is hope for salvation of the

world it has to be sought outside the sphere of globalization. Over against the second millennium which fought a relentless war against tyranny, despotism and monarchy, the subalterns of the third millennium have to fight against economic domination of the few, strengthen participatory democracy, work for pluralism of systems rather than mere plurality and endeavour to give justice to the victims of society. In the third part Felix Wilfred argues that in the face of attacks against Christian communities, Christians have to become involved more deeply in civil society, through dialogue with other religions clarify issues that create difficulties, establish a style of collaboration rather than of mere parallelism, and challenge the dominant mode of development blindly borrowed from elsewhere.

The book presents a thorough discussion of the various, social, economic and cultural issues facing Christians in Asia today. Written in the method of liberation theology, it has both its advantages and disadvantages. It presents the issues in clear detail from the actual groans of the victims of society. As the author states that he drew his data from the lived experience of the Asian students of the Manila Pastoral Institute the issues are clearly and realistically presented without the abstractions of economics and sociology. But the great disadvantage is that one will not even suspect that there is another side to the issues. For how can the economically weak third world pull itself up by its own bootstraps without a massive investment of resources from the industrialized nations? Development cannot be achieved by charity and doleouts. Why should convinced Marxists like Jyoti Basu of West Bengal eagerly woo the Multinationals if what they bring is all evil? Do those who blame globalization for the ills of the poor of the third world realize that it cuts both ways, that when the global market slowed down for a few months great many in the investing world lost almost three fourths of their savings? Will not a more global and balanced approach to issues which affect the poor everywhere be more meaningful?

PREACHING WISDOM TO THE WISE, THREE TREATISES
by **Robert de Nobili S. J.** trss. & introd, Anand Amaladass S.J. &
Francis X.Cluny S.J., St.Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2000.

The book is a translation of the three books of the 17th century Jesuit missionary and scholar Robert de Nobili, *Report Concerning Certain Customs of the Indian Nation*, *The Dialogue on Eternal Life*, and *Inquiry into the Meaning of God*. The translators provide a lengthy introduction on the contributions of De Nobili in taking a positive approach to Hinduism and Indian culture at a time when the majority of missionaries evinced a negative colonialist attitude. He was a courageous pioneer who made a clear distinction between religion and culture. Born in Rome in 1577 he became a Jesuit in 1597, was ordained priest in 1603 and came to India in 1605, where he lived and worked till his death near Chennai in 1656. He learned Tamil and Sanskrit and made a deep study of Hindu Scriptures. Citing the positive approach of St.Thomas, the Apostle to the deities of the gentiles and their religious faith De Nobili expresses great admiration for the learning, faith and integrity of the Brahmins as truly wiseman. He entered into earnest dialogue with them on the basis of the important role reason has in human life, and the contribution made by divine revelation regarding truths that are beyond the capacity of the human mind. The point of his debate with them was how to discern true revelation and false ones, and critically examine the available data regarding the Indian religions.

Many questioned the suitability of De Nobili's method. Though he was successful in his debates he gained few converts. One reason for his failure was that his knowledge of Hinduism was restricted to the Scriptures, with only very little contact with the actual life of the people and that he was exclusively committed to the Scholastic theology of Thomas Aquinas, which was practically unintelligible to his Indian partners in dialogue. But these writings of De Nobili has historical value in judging past missionary methods. They also throw some light on the complex issue of inculturation in communicating the Christian message to the Indian people.

THE SPIRITUAL HERITAGE OF THE ST. THOMAS CHRISTIANS,
Dr.James Aerthayil CMI., Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2001

The book is an elaborate discussion of the spirituality of the St.Thoman Christians based principally on a detailed study of their liturgy and traditional practices. St.Thomas Christian spirituality has a unique identity drawing inspiration from the long tradition, tracing back to St.Thomas the Apostle, from the Indian culture which formed the background of its history and the Chaldean liturgical heritage dating back to the Chaldean bishops who came to the help of the Indian Church left without its own bishops at certain periods in its history.

Without the influence of a rational philosophy as for the Greeks and Romans, for the Easterns liturgy was the main support and source of theological thinking. For the whole Orient liturgical celebration was the school of spiritual formation. For the Thomas Christians as for the Chaldeans fasting and asceticism was the foundation for spiritual life. The Indian emphasis on *tapas*, penance, added a new spiritual dimension to the rigorous self-discipline imposed by the East Syrian seasons of fast, during which people abstained not only from meat and fish but also milk, butter, egg and all animal produce.

This self-discipline led to strict moral discipline and had a catching effect on people of other faiths, though it was not sufficiently deep or strong to launch a missionary venture in the heart of Hindu India.

But the historical contentions of the book need a careful analysis. That the Thomas Christians had hierarchical relations with the Chaldean Church from the 7th to the 17th century has scant literary evidence to support it. In fact it was only a few decades before the Portughese came at the beginning of the 16th century that Thomas Christians for long without any bishops sent abroad a delegation, which by chance reached Armenia and met a Chaldean patriarch who sent with them three bishops to minister to the orphan church. As Cardinal Tisserant concludes all that there existed was purely neighbourly relations between two independent churches. Similarly the criticism that Dom Menesis had no authority to hold the Synod of Diamper forgets the historical fact that well over half a century from the beginning of the 16th century

Pope after Pope had granted the Portuguese monarch exclusive rights to administer the Church in India. Though the Chaldean patriarch Sulakah made the trip to Rome and asked the same administrative right over the Malabar Church, the Portuguese ambassador strongly objected to the claim and the patriarch was firmly denied any such powers, because Malabar was a *sui juris* Apostolic Church. The Bishops of India had told Patriarch Timotheus I that the children of St. Thomas had nothing to learn from the children of Addai and Mari.. In fact Menesis in spite of the limited knowledge that Westerns had about Oriental rites ordered a careful study of the Chaldean texts to find whether they contained any heretical statements. It was in the light of the recent purely legalistic approach to rites that Vatican jurists wanted to reduce rites to a few major ritual families and found it convenient to subordinate the Apostolic Church of St. Thomas as an offshoot of the major Chaldean rite. Though it may be true that Chaldean rite was the only one found in Malabar, the rite itself had such a great regional diversity, that when Roman authorities thought of printing the liturgical text revised by Menesis, Archbishop Roz stopped the whole process by showing that the text presented by Menesis never existed in India. Restoration of a ritual tradition strongly emphasized by Vatican II is not exactly going back to a past golden era. At least for the Oriental churches such a golden era never existed. Here restoration is retrieving the unique contributions in particular regions and cultures that have special relevance for inculcation.

PERSON AND FAITH OF APOSTLE THOMAS IN THE GOSPELS,
George Kaniarakath CMI, New Delhi: Intercultural Publications,
 1998

Dr. Kaniarakath studying the person and role of the doubting Thomas in the Gospel of St. John shows the special methodology of the evangelist not to prove the resurrection of Jesus but to bring out the nature of faith in the Risen Lord. Bringing together the recent studies on the Fourth Gospel. On the one hand it shows the evangelist's effort to bring the Jewish conception and vision of the Messiah to Yahweh's eschatological revelation. The sacred *topos* is no longer Jerusalem but

the exalted Christ. The episodes dealing with the final confession of Thomas "My Lord and My God" is preceded by his simple belief in the resurrection of Jesus along with the other disciples on account of the empty tomb, the appearance of the risen Jesus to the women, then to the disciples without Thomas and finally to the disciples with Thomas. In this act of faith one has to see the relation between seeing and believing. First there is seeing without believing, then believing without seeing, then the sensible vision of and faith in Christ, and finally there is faith that does not see: "Blessed are those who have not seen and believed!"

The author examines and explains the different psychological and theological meaning of the different appearances of the Risen Christ as presented in the Synoptic Gospels and then in St. John. The book shows that the gospels are not records of events but rather faith presentations of the Apostles who bore witness to their experience of the Risen Christ in concrete historical situations. Here Thomas had great importance. As the author states: "Thomas is a very practical man with firm convictions and decisions. Once he decided, he stood firm to the last." (p.166). This is a significant book for understanding the meaning of the Gospels as documents of Christian faith.

CONFUCIUS BEYOND TIMES, UNDERSTANDING CONFUCIAN HUMANISTIC VALUES IN TODAY'S CONTEXT,
Thomas Muppathinchira, University of Ghent, Belgium: Communication and Cognition, 1999

The book tries to correct the common misunderstanding that Confucianism was a philosophy that promoted a family based society that divided people into hierarchical classes. Carefully examining the historical background of the humanistic thought in which Confucianism was rooted the author shows how Confucius revolutionized the whole Chinese philosophy by making it alive in the political evolution of the Chinese people. Emphasizing important concepts and virtues like heaven, humanity, propriety, way, virtue, filial piety and loyalty Confucianism has remained a powerful influence in the whole Chinese history, controlling the exercise of power of those in authority.

Entry of Marxism into China presented a great challenge to the Chinese tradition, including the May Fourth Movement and the Cultural Revolution. But when the crisis is over it is to Confucian heritage that people return, and in China it was Marxism that underwent radical change. The book is a valuable, scientific study of the humanistic values that still shape the future of China.

John B. Chethimattam

Editorial

The most threatened value today is undoubtedly human life. New issues related to life seem to threaten human life and its dignity. With new techniques, however, the human has greater control over life and human destiny. But individuals are so much confused as to find it difficult to take decisions on matters relating to life. For instance, techniques in genetic engineering and experiments on human person disclose the magnitude of the problem. Genetic engineering, on the one hand, promises to cure several diseases of the child in the womb of the mother; on the other hand, techniques available in genetic engineering propose experiments on the fetus without any concern for its individuality and personhood. Experimentation on human person helps us to diagnose and handle serious illnesses. Experimentation, however, that ignores approved principles question the very dignity of the human person and value of human life. Can knowledge and capability at our disposal be used without ethical considerations? The answer is in the negative. We do not ignore the already given ethical codes for bio-medical field. But it is beyond doubt that the situation is so complex that we need continued updating of the existing norms and standards. In order to solve problems to the satisfaction of all, proposals must come from various sources and disciplines. In other words, proposals must necessarily be interdisciplinary and must take seriously the reflections of ethicists, philosophers and theologians. Socio-cultural and religious perspectives are decisive in the formation of ethical norms and standards for bio-medical field. Dialogue between experts in the bio-medical field and ethicists, philosophers and theologians needs to be promoted. Experts in various disciplines should have some ends in common, namely promotion of the human good and upholding of the value of human life. The present issue of *Jeevadhara* on **Value of Human Life and some Current Issues** is an attempt at searching the ethical, philosophical and religious values of life that could offer the basis for a discussion on the challenges of life and promises of science. Current discussions and debates on several issues in India and else where reveal one thing be-

yond doubt: what is at stake is the value of human life. Hence this attempt to initiate a discussion on it. Certain issues are also analysed here in the light of Christian and professional standards.

Dr.Thomas Kulangara discusses, in his article on *The Value of Life in the Hindu Traditions*, the various Indian approaches to human life and its value. The article serves as an eye-opener in leading us to the con-vection that the theme: human life should necessarily be on the agenda of inter-religious forums. In his article on *Life and its Value in the Bible*, Dr.Philip Chempakassery presents the Judeo-Christian vision of human life. In the Judeo-Christian setting human life is divine in its creation and significance. It is both a gift and a responsibility entrusted to the human. Precisely because it is sacred, human life owes reverence and care.. Only God has absolute ownership over life; the human can claim only stewardship. Experiments on the human and use of techniques must take into account these aspects seriously. Dr.Felix Podimattam OFM Cap.'s article on *Fertility Techniques: Promise or Danger* treats of two important topics, as Coning and Genome Revolution which are the most current problems confronting us today and are widely discussed among experts. Dr.Hormis Mynatty's article on *Experimentation of Human Person: Use or Abuse* takes us to the various aspects of the question under discussion. Experimentation on human person is shown to be not just a matter of technical competence and hence cannot be left to the discretion of scientists or experts alone. Besides observing conventional ethical norms, a continuous revision of standards and norms in the light of new developments is a must. Dr.Paulachan Kochappilly CMI draws our attention to one of the important concerns of our time, namely, *Celebration of the Old Age: Care of Old People*. The article shows that concern for old people means not only providing them the necessities of life, but also creating in them a feeling that they are wanted. Enabling them to continue living in the mainstream of the society and helping them fulfil the offer of their life is very important.

We thank all the writers for their valuable and timely contributions to this issue of *Jeevadhara* and hope that this issue will in some way help the readers in their ethical decisions on human life.

The Value of Human Life in the Hindu Traditions

Thomas Kulangara

The author examines the different Hindu traditions such as the Vedic and the Upanishadic, and the Darsanas , especially the Advaita of Sankara and Visishtadvaita of Ramanuja. In general they all acknowledge human life as a great reality and as identified with the sacred and the mysterious power behind matter.. The life of the individual self is viewed as a reflection of the Divine animating the whole cosmos.

The hindu view of the human is essentially linked up with its holistic view regarding the entire cosmos. Human being is the microcosm and has the macrocosm as its prototype. It is essentially the divine life, the life immanent in and, at the same time, transcending the universe. The sanctity and value of human life in the hindu traditions consists not so much in a belief in the unique dignity of the human person as an individual and immortal being as in the belief that the human life, like life immanent in all creation, is an expression of the divine, eternal, infinite life which is identified with the Brahman or the ultimate reality. One may rightly say that it is life as such and not as the human life of individual persons that is extolled as divine and eternal in the Indian traditions. In the following pages we shall briefly indicate how human life is viewed in the hindu scriptures and philosophical schools, especially in the *vedanta darsana*

The Vedic Idea of the Human

The vedic seers were greatly impressed by the order of the events and things in the cosmos and believed spontaneously that there exists a

correlation between the cosmic order and the human order of ethical, social and religious life. The order of the human life depended on the maintenance of the cosmic order. The vedic man believed that the best way of ensuring the cosmic order and thereby the human order, i.e., order in both macro and micro-cosmic levels, was by reproducing the cosmic order of things and events in his own thought forms and actions through sacrifices and other religious ceremonies. The vedic hymns indicate the primitive belief of the human in personified supernatural powers who presided over the natural phenomena. Sacrifices were also attempts to please the deities and thus ensure the good order of the universe. Thus the Rig Veda presents Manu, the first human or the ancestor of human race, as the first sacrificer. Manu is the instituter of sacrifices. It was Manu, who kindled the fire and made, along with seven priests, the first sacrifice to gods. Manu's sacrifice became the prototype and model of all other sacrifices.¹

Manu is also described as the progenitor of humankind. The divine origin of the human race is accounted for in so many ways. For example, Manu is said to have descended from heaven and earth, the great parents of all that exists. Or, *Agni* (Fire) is described as begetting the offspring of humans.²

The famous hymn of the human (*Purusha sukta*)³ traces the origin of all that exist in the universe, including the human, to Purusha, the primeval human who is conceived as the victim of a great sacrifice. During the course of the sacrifice Purusha was dismembered and, the entire universe came from the different parts of the Purusha victim. Thus creation is the product of a ritual sacrifice. Obviously, it is a pantheistic view, for it is said that "Purusha is all this world, what has been and what shall be": Only "one fourth of him is all creatures, and three fourths are the world of the immortals in heaven".⁴

This hymn brings out some basic insights of the vedic tradition regarding the human. First of all, since creation is the result of a sacrifice, every religious sacrifice performed on earth is a repetition of the primordial Purusha sacrifice and can act as a renewal of the original creative act and thus can contribute to the maintenance of the cosmic order. Secondly, the individual human beings, i.e., the microcosmic human has as his / her prototype the macrocosmic Purusha and hence is

the image of the primeval human. This explains the divinity of the individual human being. In fact, the three fourths of the primeval human (the prototype) are said to be spiritual, immortal or divine, and only one fourth is mortal or material. Thus the individual human is at the same time an image of both the divine and the material world. Through human performance of the sacrifice on the microcosmic level he can ensure the continued and orderly existence of the universe where he himself finds his home.

However the human is primarily a spiritual soul. The vedic human believed that the soul can separate itself from the body and can continue to exist even after death. There is an "unborn part" in the human, i.e., the immortal soul. In Rig Veda we read a hymn addressed to Agni (Fire), praying that he may convey the 'unborn part' "to the world of the righteous".⁵ This 'unborn part' is understood as the inner human, devoid of birth and of psychosomatic parts. It is the same as the immortal soul, although the term 'Atman' as denoting the immortal soul was of a later origin. In the Rig Veda the two technical terms used for the animating principle in the human are *asu* (life) and *manas* (mind). *Asu* signifies the vital force, the principle at the basis of breath, even of animals.⁶ *Manas* is the seat of thought and emotions, and was believed to dwell in the heart (*hrd*) of the human.⁷

During the period of the *Brahmanas* the sacrificial rites acquired an exaggerated cosmic significance. The rites were regarded no more as propitiatory acts offered to gods but as something identical with the cosmic process. The supreme task of the human was to be a sacrificer so that he could maintain the order of the cosmic phenomena by timely and faithful performance of all prescribed sacrifices. The moral and spiritual dimensions of the human were, so to say, no more in the forefront. Faith in the efficacy of the sacrifices and fidelity in the performance of the sacrifices were all that counted.

The *Brahmanas* express their understanding of the human through the description of the primal human in terms of figures like Manu, Prajapati, Purusha etc.⁸ In many texts Purusha, Prajapati, Narayana and Brahman are identified or associated. They all signify the primordial image or prototype of the human. It is Purusha (identified with Prajapathi and with Brahman) that ensouls the cosmos and creates the universe and is the source of time and space⁹. At the same time we see in many

texts a tendency to identify the individual self, with the cosmic self the reason being that the same stuff making up the world is found in the body of the human also. However, it was only a vague identification of the self within the individual (i.e., breath, mind or spirit) with the self in the cosmos. A more definite vision of the individual self as *jiva* and the cosmic self as *Brahman* and their identification came only later.¹⁰

The Upanishadic understanding of the Human

The Upanishadic seers continued to ask questions about the ultimate origin and nature of the universe and of the human. Through a process of introspective meditation combined with rational speculation they arrived at a clear intuition that the self of the human is an expression of the universal self, or the world spirit, and is even identical with it. Salvation is attained, it was increasingly recognized, not so much through ritual worship, sacrifices or through good conduct but through the true knowledge about the real nature of the ultimate reality. This paved the way from a sacrificial conception to a metaphysical understanding of the human. Gradually, the cosmic *Purusha* was freed of its vedic sacrificial context and was recognized as the inmost self of the cosmic phenomena and of the human. It is by knowing this *Purusha* that one attains salvation.

"I know this mighty person (*Purusha*).

Of the color of the sun, beyond darkness.

Only by knowing him does one pass over death.

There is no other path for going there."¹¹

Purusha is the highest metaphysical reality, the ultimate ground of the objective world. The same *Purusha* is the animating principle of the subjective structure of the human. In the *Svetasvetara Upanishad* *Purusha* is taken as the supreme deity from whom the entire creation has its origin. *Purusha* here is a personal but pantheistic deity. In the *Katha Upanishad* we read that the *Purusha* abides in the individual self: "A person of the measure of a thumb stands in the midst of one's self (Atman)".¹²

In brief, the *Purusha* in the Upanishads has a very pervasive meaning. It stands for individual human person, cosmic person, the personal absolute or the impersonal ground of the whole phenomenal existence, including human beings. The absolute, eternal reality as such is

expressed in terms of Atman (world-soul) or Brahman. It is the one, infinite and incomprehensible reality. The universe is its body or manifestation. However, the multiplicity of the objects of the world does not affect the inner unity of the absolute reality, albeit it is immanent in all forms of manifestations. Nevertheless, the human occupies a special place among the manifold manifestations of Brahman. The cavity of the heart of every human is said to be the dwelling of Brahman. The human can reach Brahman by entering into his own heart through intense meditation.¹³

The human body serves as a support for the immortal self for its incarnation. This perishable body is composed of sixteen parts, namely the five elements (*bhuta*), five organs of perception (*budhi indriya*), five organs of actions (*karmendriya*) and mind (*manas*). With death the self rejoins the highest self. During the course of incarnation the self passes through different states of consciousness such as waking, dream sleep and deep dreamless sleep. While the soul is in the state of deep sleep it becomes temporarily one with Brahman and enjoys bliss. The fourth state of consciousness marks the disappearance of the manifold universe and union with Brahman in perfect consciousness.¹⁴

In brief, the vision of the human in classical Hinduism is that of a pure spiritual self (Atman) without any intrinsic or substantial connection with the material body in which it is incarnated. The embodiment of the self is like an imprisonment necessitated by the law of karma that works itself out through the cycle of re-births (*samsara*). Every action, prompted by desire, *kama*, or self-love, produces a proportionate fruit, good or evil, to be borne out in course of successive re-incarnations. Both heaven and hell are only temporary and once the fruits are exhausted the human is re-born in the *samsara*. The nature with its three constitutive qualities (*trigunic prakrti*) binds the soul to the body and causes re-birth. All activities belong to the *prakrti* but the soul, due to ignorance, thinks that it is the agent of action and the enjoyer of fruits. Liberation is possible only through salvific knowledge and love of God.

The concept of the Human in the Orthodox Darsanas

The six orthodox darsanas differ considerable in their understanding of the human, his ontological status and eternal destiny. The Nyaya and Vaiśeṣika schools developed a pluralistic and theistic vision of reality and admitted the existence of a plurality of human souls, eternal, spiritual

and distinct from one another. Soul is one of the eternal substances that make up the reality. It is the causal substratum, underlying the process of sensation, consciousness, cognition, volition and activities of an individual. However, opposing the vedantic view that Atman, by nature is a self-shining consciousness, the Nyaya Vaiśeṣika held the view that consciousness is only a non-essential attribute of the soul. Liberation is the absolute escape of the soul from the cosmic process, from all sorrow, consciousness, pleasure etc.. *Mokṣa* is an eternal repose from which there is no awakening.

The Samkhya school developed a dualistic metaphysics that admits, along the reality of nature (*prakṛti*), a spiritual co-principle named self or Purusha. The self is an indubitable and self-manifest reality. Even the denial of it pre-supposes a self that denies. The Purusha, by nature, is different from the body, mind, senses and intellect. It is not an object in the world. Unlike the *Prakṛti*, the Purusha is simple, static, passive and inactive. It is not an agent, for all activities fall in the realm of *prakṛti*. Purusha is only a detached onlooker (a witness or *sakṣin*). The Samkhya view differs from the Nyaya realism and tends toward the vedantic idealism when it understands the self as pure consciousness. For them the Purusha is not a substance with the attribute of consciousness but is consciousness by its very nature. All its psychic life is due to ignorance. By ignorance it associates itself with the evolutes of the *Prakṛti* such as intellect, mind, sense organs and the organs of activities.

The Purusha is all-pervasive, eternal and uncaused. However, in its transmigrating state in the *samsāra*, the Purusha is limited by the body with which it is temporarily associated. Purusha is taken as the final cause, or end of the whole cosmic process. The Samkhya school admits a plurality of selves. However, their theory of the plurality of selves is not radical enough to accord an eternal value to the individual selves, for according to them in the state of liberation there would be absolutely no difference between the selves. The pluralism pertains to the empirical condition only. Obviously, the Samkhya view of the human tends towards the vedantic view. The Yoga school basically accepted the Samkhya philosophy of the human.

The Purva Mīmāṃsaka school admits the existence of the plurality of soul. According to this school every soul is by nature eternal, omnipotent, ubiquitous and infinite. The school developed a sacrifice-

centered understanding of the human and affirmed that the soul is an active agent, a passive enjoyer of the fruits of action and the substratum of consciousness. The soul is capable of experiencing the good and evil fruits of the vedic prescriptions that they fulfill. Consciousness, however, is not the essence but only an accidental and static quality of the self. The soul, by nature is unconscious but acquires qualities like cognition, volition, feelings etc. on account of the merits and demerits accruing from its action. According to some scholars of this school, the soul is always endowed with potential consciousness. Liberation would be freedom from all qualities and modes of being, including cognition and bliss.

Human Life according to Sankara's Advaita

Sankara understands the human (*jiva*) as a fragment of the Divine in the universe. Hence the human life is a part (*amsa*) or ray of the Divine life in the universe. Two terms are employed to denote the empirical self or the individual human being: *jiva* and *purusha*. *Jiva* comes from the root *jiv* (to breathe) and signifies that which breathes, referring to the biological aspect. *Purusha* means '*purisaya*', 'that which dwells in the citadel of the heart', indicating the soul, or the psychic dimension of the human. Sankara rejects the theory that *jiva* is only one (*ekajivavada*) and accepts the plurality of selves in the phenomenal level. The individual ego is a complex structure, serving as a center of individual experiences, determined by bodily organism and psychic conditions. The determining principle of individuation is the internal organ known differently as mind (*manas*), understanding (*buddhi*), self-sense (*ahamkara*) etc.. It is the internal organ which differs from individual to individual that makes the Universal Self or the Ultimate Consciousness particularized into manifold individual consciousness-es. The individual self has intelligence as its unifying principle and the faculty of memory preserves its continuity. However, the self is only a changing formation and lacks any substantiality. In fact, both the *jiva* (microcosm) and the universe (macrocosm) are only expressions of the objectivization of the Universal Self and lack any substantiality. Nevertheless, the human self has some uniqueness because in the human self alone the nature seeks to transcend itself consciously by mental and spiritual effort. The human is part of the universe, through whom the whole universe seeks to reach up to the Divine.

The complex structure of the individual self is explained in terms of the five layers - the material body (*anna*), the principle of breath which regulates all conscious activities (*prana*), mind or principle of conscious activities (*manas*), intelligence which is the seat of ego or individuality (*buddhi* or *vijnana*), and finally, the principle of universal consciousness (Atman, corresponding to *ananda*) which serves as background for the whole structure.¹⁵ A distinction is made between the gross physical body and the subtle mental body. While the individual self casts off the gross body at death, the subtle body, made up of transparent elements and vital forces persists as a permanent factor of the jiva during the course of transmigration. The individual self, in its essential spiritual nature, is neither a doer nor an enjoyer but due to its ignorance (*avidya*), and the consequent association with the adjuncts of the internal organ and *buddhi*, appears to be a doer and an enjoyer. Similarly, the soul is falsely said to be atomic. In fact, the jiva by nature is infinite and all-pervading. In brief, the individuation of the Atman into a plurality of selves is only an appearance.

For Sankara, all that is valuable in the human is the Universal Self, i.e., Brahman which is the fundamental substratum of the individual self and consciousness. The individual self as such is only a product of ignorance and has no substantial value. The question of how the Supreme appears as manifold jivas is a mystery. Sankara proposes two analogies to throw light on this issue. The first is the theory of limitation (*avaccheda vada*) according to which the one self appears as many just as the one cosmic space, (*mahakasa*) when limited by a jar, appears as a multiplicity of spaces. When the limitation is removed the limited space (*ghatakasa*) becomes merged into the cosmic space. The second is the theory of reflection (*pratibimba vada*). According to this theory the jivas and their adjuncts are only the reflection of the real in *avidya*, just as we have the reflections of sun and moon in water. On removing the water, the reflection will vanish and the original (*bimba*), i.e., Brahman, alone will remain. Whatever be the flaws of these theories, the unswerving insistence of Sankara is that the jivas are the same as the Brahman appearing in some mysterious way.

Although the individual selves are the products of ignorance and lack any substantial worth, Sankara accords to them some value in contrast with the other objects of the world. He makes a distinction between the appearance of Brahman as jiva and as the world. There are

two kinds of illusions. The first - *sopadhika bhrama* - is to attribute to a given object a feature which does not belong to it. For example, a white conch seen through a glass is attributed the color yellow. The second - *nirupadhika bhrama* - is to mistake a given object for another which is not given. The first refers to the individual soul which is, in fact, real and is identified with Brahman. Only the individuation is a false attribution. The second illusion refers to the world which is a total mistaking of Brahman for something that is not there, just like a rope is mistaken for a snake. The distinction indicates that Sankara grants some special significance to the individual human selves.

Ignorance, according to Sankara, is not a private defect of this or that person. All individual selves share this ignorance. It is the cosmic principle of finiteness. He explains it as the individuals' share in the cosmic adjunct of *maya*, pertaining to Isvara. Both the individual selves and consciousness are to be sublimated by the true or higher knowledge, i.e., the intuition that the *jivas* and the whole reality are non-dual or identical with Brahman.

The Human according to Ramanuja's *Viśiṣṭadvaita*

In Ramanuja's vision, reality is not a bare identity but a determinate whole with internal differences that are real. Brahman is a synthetic whole in which both the plurality of individual souls and of the material world find their place as real moments or modes. The individual soul, according to Ramanuja, is a real and distinct mode or part of the Supreme. The soul has existed in Brahman as a mode, indeed as a unique individual being, from all eternity. The souls always retain their essential qualities. The soul is different from the body to which it is attached during the period of its bondage in *samsara*. The body is only a psycho-physical organism belonging to the *prakṛti* which serves as an instrument or vehicle for the soul until its liberation. The soul is indestructible and maintains its identity through the process of births and deaths. Besides, the soul is imperceptible, minute in size or atomic (*anu*). It is a subtle entity in contrast to the grossness of the material world and is seated in the lotus of the heart. Above all, the soul is a knower, endowed with intelligence and self consciousness. The soul is a cognitive agent even when it is disassociated with the psychophysical organism supplied by the *prakṛti*. Consciousness is the essential nature of the soul. Ramanuja considers consciousness both as the innermost nature (*svarupa*) of the

self and as an eternal attribute. Over against Sankara's identification of consciousness with Brahman, Ramanuja maintains that the self-both finite and Divine - is not pure intelligence but a knowing agent with the attribute of consciousness because there is an inevitable distinction between the knower and the knowledge. The very nature of consciousness is that it reveals an object to a knower and this implies distinction among beings. In every act of knowledge, Ramanuja recognizes three distinct factors, namely the knowing subject, consciousness which is an attribute of the subject, and the object of knowledge. However, knowledge is not a perishable attribute of the self but constitutes its essential nature.

Ramanuja uncompromisingly defends the abiding nature and value of the individuality of finite souls. The finite self, according to him, is essentially a self-conscious subject, an eternal self distinct from both Brahman and *prakrti*. Ramanuja spares no effort to refute Sankara's theory of limiting adjuncts (*upadhi*) which explains away the individuality of the soul in terms of the psycho-physical organism that projects an unreal division on the reality of the One Self. The personal identity or individuation of the soul is not a mere appearance pertaining to the sphere of *prakrti* only but belongs to the very essence of the finite self. The 'I-awareness' or 'self-consciousness' of the soul is the basis for its personal identity and this attests to the ontological reality of the finite self. No superior knowledge can sublimate this fundamental 'I-awareness' of the human. It will persist throughout the *samsaric* existence of the soul as well as in the state of release. Enlightenment (*jnana*), according to Ramanuja, consists in the realization of the distinction between one's basic self-identity and one's empirical self-identity which arises from the *prakrtic* components constituting the soul's embodiment. The liberated souls continue to be individual persons.¹⁶ Only the attributive consciousness undergoes contraction or expansion. As a corollary of this view, Ramanuja also affirms the plurality of the individual souls. The scriptural texts which deny plurality, he argues, intend only to deny the existence of the soul apart from Brahman. In brief, the souls and the world constitutes the eternal and distinct but inseparable modes of the non-dual Brahman.

Conclusion

The Hindu traditions, in general, acknowledge life as a reality. Life

is identified with the sacred and mysterious power behind matter and empirical experiences. The life of the individual self is viewed in general as a reflection of the divine life animating the entire cosmos. The correspondence and correlation between the microcosm and the macrocosm remained a parameter for the vedic thinking on life. Their reflections were couched in religious categories and the locus of their thinking was the sacred sacrifice. The Upanishadic seers adopted a more spiritual and metaphysical line of reflection. They intuited the life principle in the human as the Atman and identified it with the Brahman, the source and animating principle behind the phenomenal realm of experience. It is the same divine life that animates the individual selves and the entire spectrum of beings in the cosmos. In deed, this life is sacred and transcends the 'seen' and the 'unseen'. The final destiny of the human is to realize this truth of all truths.

In the orthodox schools of Indian philosophy, except in the advaita vedanta of Sankara, there is a strong current of realism that acknowledges the reality and the perennial value of life of the individual self. The advaita school known to be the most sublime flowering of all hindu philosophy, definitely accords great value to life and regard it as sacred and eternal. However, Sankara explains away the individuality of selves as a product of ignorance. Human personality has only an empirical value and the sense of the ego is to be sublated by the highest intuition regarding the non-dual reality of Brahman. Ramanuja, though he faithfully maintains the non-duality of reality, gives us a theistic frame work where human personality and life have an abiding value.

What is less clear in the hindu thinking is the connection between life and matter in the life of the individual self. The general tendency seems to be dualistic, the view that atman by nature is eternal, spiritual and blissful, and that the body is material, standing in opposition to the interest of the soul. The soul's link with the body is accidental, although governed by the law of karma. The ultimate goal of all moral and religious striving is to obtain the emancipation of the atman from its psycho somatic imprisonment. Here arises a very pertinent question. To what extend can such a philosophy of life serve as support for the dignity and value of the life of the human as an incarnated person? Perhaps, what we need in India is to develop a philosophy of life that

can support and safeguard the dignity and value of human life within its historical and incarnated setting. The challenge of the day is to take an attitude of creative fidelity to traditions as a whole and search for support for such a view of life from the numerous positive elements of the Indian traditions.

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Foot Notes

- 1 See Rig Veda 10.63.7 and 1.76.5.
- 2 Rig Veda 1.96.2.
- 3 Rig Veda 10.90.
- 4 Rig Veda 10.90.8-14.
- 5 Rig veda 10.16.3-4.
- 6 Rig Veda 10.15.1.
- 7 Rig Veda 8.89.5.
- 8 Satapatha Brahmana 1.8.1.1-10; 7.5.2.6.
- 9 Satapatha Brahmana 13.6.1.1.
- 10 M. Dhavamony, *Classical Hinduism*, Universita Gregoriana Editrice, 1982, 120
- 11 Svetasvetara Upanishad 3.8. See also Katha Upanishad 3.11.
- 12 4.12.-13.
- 13 Chandogya Upanishad 3.14
- 14 Chandogya Upanishad 8.9-11: Mandukya Upanishad 5-12.
- 15 See Taittairiya Upanishad 2.1
- 16 See Ramanja's Vedanta Sutras with commentary, tr. Thibaut G., *The Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XL VIII, Motilal Banarsidas, Delhi, 1976, 69-72.

Life and Its Value in the Bible

Philip Chempakassery

In this article the value of life and especially of human life is considered in the light of the teaching, first of the Old Testament and then of the New Testament of the Bible. OT presents life as a precious gift from God and hence it cannot be destroyed. There is a gradation in the quality of life and the life of the human stands at the top of the ladder. According to the NT life of the human has supreme value, as humans are children of God who have the possibility of attaining fullness of life in God with Jesus Christ.

At all times, as now, the most important concern of the human was about life, its meaning and safety, the ways and means of safeguarding it. The Bible, being the record of the strife and struggles of peoples - of both testaments - for survival in a world of adverse situations, looks at life with wonder and reverence. But is there a uniform idea about life in the Bible, which represents different periods separated by centuries and which came from humans of different historical and cultural milieus? In spite of cultural and temporal differences, we should say, they do not change the fundamental direction the Bible takes towards life.

Terminology

The Hebrew Bible has many words denoting life like *chay* (or *chayah* - to live) *hayah* (to be or to exist), *nepesh* (or *napash* - to breathe), *etsem* (figurative use), *yom* (day or life time), *bashar* (flesh), *ruah* (spirit), *leb* (heart) etc. *Chay* has the root meaning to exist and derivatively it means life. *Nepesh* is the frequently used word for life and it means literally lifetime, life as extended in time. *Bashar* is sometimes translated as flesh. But it has a wider significance than the merely physical or material aspect. *Bashar* is the living creature mostly in its tenderness and

consequently also in its weakness. The thing God formed from soil for the creation of the human before He breathed into its nostrils is not called *bashar* but is *adam apar* (man of the dust). Neither does the OT call a dead body simply *bashar*. *Bashar* is neither the opposite of soul or of life. But it is the opposite of spirit (or *ruah* of God) in the sense that spirit is power while *bashar* is weakness. Yet it has in it the idea of life and freshness. *Hayah* which occurs a total of 3632 times in the Old Testament¹ means existence in general and life in particular. *Chay* is life and is contrasted with dead matter. In its original meaning it denoted length of a person's life.² But the term occurs in many forms. *Chayim*, the plural is the usual word for life rather than *chay* the singular. It can also mean animal or any living creature. The breath God breathed into the first man is breath of *chayim* (breath of life). Then man became a *nepesh chayyah* (living man). The noun *nepesh* (spirit or living creature) is derived from the verb *napash* - to breathe. Therefore it can denote anything that breathes, any living being with breath in it. *Ruah* is a still more complicated word. The literal meaning is wind, moving air. Therefore breath in which air is used can be called *ruah*. In fact the OT uses this word in that sense (Gen 6:17; 7:15; 2 Sam 22:16). The root meaning is extended to include the body as such, the living body (cf. Lam 4:7) as well as the human spirit and the divine spirit. Another word *etsem* has a variety of meanings like self same, bone, body, life etc. The root meaning seems to be self same which in actual use is extended to include life. *Leb* means heart, the seat of feelings and impulses. *Nishmah* means literally breath. In that sense it is similar to *nepesh*. But it also means spirit, life etc. In modern Hebrew this word is very often heard in greetings. *Mah nishmah* means how do you do or how is your life and does not refer only to breathing.

The Composition of the Human according to the Old Testament

The foregoing considerations speak against any attempt at dividing the human reality into body and soul as we often do today with our inheritance of Greek culture as part of Christian upbringing. Such dualistic concepts are foreign to the thinking of the OT people. The human is a living organism as the animals are. Therefore all and any of the terms listed above can be used in reference to human as well as to subhuman beings. Yet the word *leb* has a special significance in relation to humans. This word is never used in the OT in reference to any animals.

Yet it is not anything human that the word signifies in its primary meaning. It means primarily the center or middle. The OT can speak of the 'heart of the sea' (cf. Ex 15:8; Ps 46:2) or of 'the midst of heaven' (Deut 4:11). Therefore primarily it means that which is set at the center of the human body. But it is also the center, which controls all the physical activities. In this sense the human heart is the most unique element; not shared by animals. This human aspect is identified with wisdom (Prov 10:21; 11:12). The human stands superior to other animals because he has a heart which is the life of the flesh" (Prov 14:30). In short, all the words denoting life are used for life in general - human and nonhuman with the only exception of *leb*, which is exclusively used for humans among all living beings. From the literal meaning of *leb* as middle or centre, we should understand the meaning of the word as referring to the center of human feelings and emotions. Similar in meaning to *leb* is the word *rechem*, which may be translated as womb or bowels or the seat of emotions. *Me'a* is another word which means intestines or belly, but which is also used to speak about human emotions.

From this analysis of terms used for living beings and their activities one thing becomes clear. What is specific for the human is his power to feel to have emotions, to be moved in his inner being by the differences in the context. Otherwise the human is only an animal. He has flesh (*bashar*), life (*nepesh*) and spirit or *soul* (*ruah*) as other animals. But more than these he has emotions and the power to comprehend and react to his situations which are represented by the words *leb*, *rechem* and *me'ah*. In other words, according to the OT, it is not the makeup which differentiates the human from animals, but the difference in reaction to the context. This difference is something that touches the very foundation of his meaningfulness. It is represented by the use of the terms image and likeness and the breath of God. In the two accounts of creation, the authors show a very clear sensibility to differentiate the human from animals. In the first account (Gen1: 1-2:4a), which is ascribed to the P tradition, the human was created after a deliberation by God ("let us make the human in our image and likeness") and the difference is seen in the fact that he bears in him the image and likeness of God. Image and likeness does not refer to any visible reality in God because the non visibility, the non materiality of God is the basic teaching of the OT, which is strongest in condemning the making of idols or images of God because "you saw no form when the Lord spoke at Horeb

out of the fire" (Deut 4:15). The punishment for violating this law is the extermination of the people of God. "I will call heaven and earth to witness against you today that you will soon utterly perish from the land that you are crossing to occupy...you...will be utterly destroyed" (Deut 4:26). Therefore the divine image and likeness does not refer to anything in the physical makeup of the human, but to the fact that he/she can act and react the way God does. The second account of creation (the J account) teaches the same idea by saying that the human has in him/her the breath of God. The making is the same as that of all the other animals. The human was created or formed (*yitzer*) from the ground (*adamah*) (Gen 2:7) as the animals were formed (*yitser*) from the ground (*adamah*) (Gen 2:19). The animals also have flesh and soul. But in the human alone is the breath of God; this breath has its origin not in the material out of which he was made but in God, the maker of all things. God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life" (Gen 2:8).

Value of Life

The OT view of the value of life has to be understood against the basic difference between human life and the life of other subhuman beings. Every life is sacred, to be valued and preserved. But every life does not have the same value or claim for preservation because there is difference in the different forms of life.

Any Life is a Value

That the OT values life, any life for that matter, is clear from the gradual progress in the laws governing life. In the first account of creation the human is given authority over all the universe. "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth" (Gen 1:28). The human is the master of all other living beings. S/he has to subdue them and have dominion over them. This subduing does not mean that s/he can do anything s/he wants. The Hebrew word for subdue (*kabash*) in its *kal* for *m* does not have the sense of enslaving. It means that s/he is given the command to preserve and keep the things in their natural hierarchical order. It is to be noted that in this first command to the human, the animals and birds are not given as food. In the first stage of history s/he is to remain vegetarian. S/he should not make animals and birds as food (cf. Gen

1:29). This also points to the fact that the command to subdue the universe does not mean that the human can do to it as s/he likes or destroy it. It only means to keep the universe in order, the way God wants them to be.

But there is a change in this command in the period after the flood. Every moving thing is given as food (9:3). It is a clear change from the first command, which required the human to be satisfied with vegetarian food. But this change does not render life worthless. It is only an adjustment to the changed situation. The human recreated through the total destruction by the deluge gets a new gift from God. It is the right to eat meat. But there is a strict prohibition: blood which is the sign of life should not be used as food. "Only, you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood" (Gen 9:4). Animals and birds are given as food. But life is never given. This prohibition against using blood as food is continued all through the history of Israel. In the law of Moses eating blood, any manner of blood, is strictly prohibited (cf. Lev 31: 17; 7:26,27). This means that OT makes a difference between life and forms of life. The different forms of life are put in the order of importance. The human who has the image of God in him/her stands at the top of the ladder. In cases of necessity s/he can make use of other forms of life. But life itself is absolutely sacred and the human has no authority over it. God is the author of life and so God alone has authority over it. The practice of pouring blood of the sacrificial animals at the altar and smearing the sacred objects with it shows that blood which is the sign of life is directly under God's authority.

Human Life

Among the different forms of life, human life is the most sacred because it was made in God's image and likeness; it has the breath of God. In the command to desist from eating blood there is no clear mention of punishment for the offenders. The punishment seems to be the punishment for homicide. After the command not to eat blood, the scripture continues, "For your own blood, I will surely require a reckoning..." (Gen. 9:5). Here the sentence is very unclear. But as it moves to homicide it concentrates on shedding human blood. Whoever sheds the blood of a human, by human shall that person's blood be shed" and the reason is also given:

"For in his own image God made humankind".(Gen 9:6)

Violation of life as such is prohibited, especially the violation of human life which is the most sacred of all forms of life. Therefore there is definite punishment for the killing of human persons. This prohibition is included in the Decalogue as "you shall not murder" (Ex. 20:13; Deut 5:17). Murder is the first sin against the human narrated in the Bible, fratricide. That story is given in a picturesque way to show the horror and consequence of a human taking the life of another human. The killing of the human is not something that happens in human relationship alone. It is directly related to God and it affects God. The consequence of killing is that the blood of the innocent slain cries to God (Gen. 4:10). By shedding innocent blood s/he defiles him/herself and the earth.

The OT with its historical and cultural background has its stress on the society to the extent of being blind sometimes to the rights of the individual. The sin of the father is visited on the children and the children's children. "You shall not bow down to them (idols) or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God punishing children for the iniquities of parents, to the third and fourth generations of those who reject me" (Deut. 5:9). The value of life is to be understood against this idea also. Individual life "in sharp contrast to modernity, is identified more closely with and by its social roles that it is transparent rather than deep, heteronymous rather than autonomous and self-legislating."³ Life is not a very easy thing to define nor is it possible to evaluate it in any direct manner. The OT understood life as something not satisfactorily answered. It is such that "the posing of query brings in its wake a sense that life is an inexhaustible storehouse of mysteries, a realm....in which the solution to any given problem gives rise to a plethora of other questions..."⁴

Though the commandment against killing is indefinite with the possibility of including any type of killing, the OT has a hierarchy of values related to the commandment against murder. Every killing is not to be taken with the same sort of importance. There is evidence in the OT of the continuance of the ancient law about revenge. If one is killed, the close relatives or those in authority have an obligation to take revenge on the offender by killing him/her (cf. Ex. 21:12). Yet the OT goes a long way from the law of non-Israelite communities. The law of revenge was life for life whether the killing was done intentionally or by mistake. But the Mosaic law forgives the offender whose offence was not premeditated. "If it (the murder) was not premeditated but came

about by an act of God (i.e., by chance), then I will appoint for you a place to which the killer may flee" (Ex. 21:13). By law the agent of the non-premeditated killing is not culpable, but his presence in the community may invite other problems. That is why he is asked to flee to the appointed place. This improvement on the law of the ancient world is a sure proof of the fact that OT attached supreme value to human life. No innocent human may be killed.

Yet life is not simply breathing. A natural life has only limited value just because it is transitory. The OT laments over the fact that human life is so transitory and that it vanishes like a dream (Ps. 73: 20). It is like water split on the ground (Sam. 14:14). If so, how can life be deemed precious? Conscious of this truth, the OT calls life vanity (Eccles. 1: 1). The dilemma is resolved by recourse to the quality of life. God alone is the author of life. The reality of human life is God's gift. It is His breath. Therefore life finds its meaning in the realization of this truth and adherence to God, the source of its existence. Life with God is the fullness of life. The quality of human life is determined by human actions in relation to God. Authentic life means life in the company of God. "Hence to live in rebellion against His will is equivalent to experiencing death in the midst of life."⁵ The psalmist exclaims: Your steadfast love is better than life. My lips will praise you" (Ps. 63:3). Human life left to itself is meaningless; but with God it acquires eternal value. Therefore the value of life is not to be sought in itself but in its relationship with God.

The book of Job is a clear evidence of how the OT tries to solve the problem of the meaning of life. Job who dares to question all existing conventions of values comes to the conclusion that nothing survives except the all-powerful will of God by which things come into existence and pass away. But the recognition of this inexorable law of life determined by God is the beginning of the acquisition of new value for life. "Any hope a man puts in anything other than this First and Last One is vain. There is nothing else that abides. This is God. He gives and takes away. From Him we come and to Him we return. Confidence in this One is the only value not subject to time."⁶

The OT has stories of many atrocities committed by the Jews against other nations and peoples. Israel took possession of the land of Canaan after driving out the inhabitants of that land and killing many thousands who resisted their occupation of the land. From a purely natural perspective, the occupation by the Israelites has no justification. Neither

the killings of many for this purpose justifiable. Yet in the light of revelation these are justified because these are for establishing God's rule in the world through the elected people of Israel.⁷ God's is the land. God's is the life of every creature. The author has absolute authority over what belongs to him. It is not to exterminate human life that these killings are permitted, but to give human life the fullness through the presence of God. Humans have to live with God and God would dwell in the world in their midst. That is real life and full life. In comparison with the fullness of life, mere life is meaningless. In other words, within human life we have to see a hierarchy - the natural life which is weak and transitory left to itself and the supernatural life which is the life with God. That is what the history of the OT tells us in clear terms.

To summarize, the OT presents life as a precious gift from God. Therefore life should never be destroyed. Yet there is gradation in the quality of life and the human stands on the top of the ladder of importance. For preservation of the form of life called human other forms may be made use of. Yet life itself is to be respected. In human life the length of days alone does not supply meaning. More over length of days is a dream, which is never realized. Yet human life obtains infinite value in the company of God. It is the greatest joy to live in God's presence.

Life in the New Testament

The NT vision of life is a continuation of the basic ideas of the OT with shifts of emphasis in the light of the Christ event, which shattered the worldviews until then.

Terminology

The NT has three words for life - *bios*, *Zoe* and *psyche*. *Bios* is the rarest which is used only 11 times in its noun form and once in its verbal form (*boo*).⁸ *Psyche* means psychological life or mental life, mainly. But in the Johannine use it means always natural life in contrast to *zoe*, the Johannine word used alone or in combination with *aionios* to mean eternal life or divine quality or life in union with Jesus.

The NT understands the human as having flesh (*sark*), mind (*psyche*) and spirit (*pneuma*). The human who believes in Jesus has the spirit of God in addition to these natural elements. The Spirit of God dwells in the spirit of man making him participate in supernatural life. "But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong

to him. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness" (Rom 8:9,10). About this Spirit Paul says further, "Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray, as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words." (Rom 8:26).

Value of Life

Human life has supreme value according to NT. Jesus' ministry was, to a great extent, directed towards healing the infirmities of natural life. "Jesus is frequently called upon to exercise his power in order that the sick or dying might live....or even to restore to life those who were already dead..."⁹ Jesus also improves upon the commandment against murder. It is not only killing that is prohibited, also not only hurting a person physically, but hurting a person mentally or keeping ill feelings is also included in the commandment against murder. Jesus says, you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not murder' and whoever murders shall be liable to judgment. But I say...if you are angry...and if you insult...you will be liable...to the hell of fire" (Mt. 5:21-22). It shows how greatly the NT has improved upon the OT idea about the value of life.

As we have seen above, the OT permits killing of natural life in view of preserving and promoting the fullness of life, which is life in the company of God. This view evaluates an individual on the basis of his/her life in the past. Evil in the past makes a human liable to punishment to the extent of annihilating his/her life. The present is not very important in this law. What one did is the important thing, not what one does or what one may be expected to do in the future. Though the law is fundamentally past-based, we have examples of concern about the present, especially in the prophets. The call to repentance can be understood only in the light of the concern for the present and preference for the present over what happened in the past. The book of Jonah, in particular, is a literary work to teach the value of repentance, i.e., the value of the changed life in the present to thwart the punishment for the life in the past. This is true of all prophets. They are all preachers of the gospel of repentance. Yet the OT is not clear on the value of repentance and its power to nullify the punishment due. Killing the evil doer was always justified in the OT.

But the NT concentrates not on the past or even the present of a human individual. It looks to the future. The value of life is not determined on the basis of what a person did in the past, or what s/he is doing

in the present, but on the basis of what s/he can possibly do in the future. The NT admits that every human being has the possibility to become a child of God. Even the biggest sinner has this possibility and therefore at no time a human being becomes strictly liable to be killed. Every killing is the destruction of the infinite possibility to which humans are open. Therefore human life attains infinite value in the NT. St James says, "You should know that whoever brings a sinner from wandering will save the sinner's soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins" (Jam. 5:20).

This infinite possibility for conversion is the primary teaching of Jesus who puts no limits to forgiveness. To the question whether it is enough to forgive an offender seven times, Jesus answers, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times" (Mt. 18:22). Forgiveness should be unlimited because there is infinite possibility in the future for the sinner to repent. The value of human life is to be assessed against this possibility. Therefore in the NT there is no law - permitting killing of a person. The only NT law is the law of love, which is based on the possibilities and not on the past.

The NT view of life has to be assessed also on the basis of what God did. The biggest gift of God to the human world is Jesus Christ. Jesus' challenge to the Samaritan woman is "if you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is speaking to you..." - showing that he himself is the gift of God. This gift is a gift to the world in the Supreme love of God (Jo. 3:16). Jesus the gift of God showed the magnitude of this gift by undergoing death for the friends (Jo. 15: 13). Friends in the Johannine language includes not only the just, but all humans irrespective of their merits and demerits because it is the world as such, not only the world of the just, that became the object of God's love(cf. Jo. 3:15;16). This same idea is expressed by Paul when he says, "while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom. 5:6).

The value of life according to the NT is clear here. It is the value of Jesus the gift of God because it is for the human life that God made that gift for the world. Nay, it is much more. The value of human life is the value of Jesus' death on the cross because it is to redeem human life that he deigned to make that supreme sacrifice.

Conclusion

The Bible integrates the values of the surrounding world and improves upon them. Life has always been a value for the human, every

life, and even animals' life. But the Bible is not blind to the human condition, which necessitates the killing of animals and birds for food. Yet life as such deserves respect. Therefore eating blood was always prohibited at all times in the history of the Bible (both in the OT and NT - cf. Act 15:29 for NT position on the matter). With regard to human life, the strict adherence to the ancient law of justice permitted and justified killing as punishment for murder or similar serious offences as well as annihilation of human societies for the maintenance and promotion of fullness of life, which is life with God. This is mainly because the OT was not able to evaluate humans on the basis of their infinite possibilities. This new understanding of life and its assessment takes shape in the NT which evaluates humans not on the basis of what they did or what they do or what they are, but on the basis of their being children of God and of their possibilities of obtaining fullness of life. In this new understanding human life attains supreme value like that of Jesus through his death on the cross.

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Foot Notes

- 1 Cfr. Bernhardt, *Hayah*, TDOT, Vol. 3, p. 371
- 2 Cfr. H. Ringgren, *Chayah*, TDOT, Vol. 4, p. 332
- 3 R.A.Di Vito, "Old Testament Anthropology and Construction of Personal Identity", *CBQ*, 61(1999), p. 237
- 4 J.B. Long, "Life", *Encyclopedia of Religions*, Vol.8(ed) Mircea Eliade, New York, Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987, p.543
- 5 J.B. Long, "Life", *Encyclopedia of Religions*, vol.8 (ed). Mircea Eliade, New York, Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987, p. 543
- 6 M.H. Pope, *Job*, the Anchor Bible, New York, Doubleday, 1973, p. LXXXII
- 7 Israelites' killings cannot be so easily justified, certainly not in the name of God (General Editor)
- 8 Cfr. H.G. Link, *Life in NIDNT*, Vol.2, (ed) C.Brown, Exeter, Paternoster press, 1980, p.475
- 9 H.G. Link, *art. Cit.* p. 480

Experimentation on Human Person: Use and Abuse

Hormis Mynatty

The author deftly deals with the different aspects of the question: on the one hand, the great need and usefulness of experimentation on human person; without it modern medicine would not have developed. To improve diagnostic and therapeutic processes bio-medical research is necessary which at least in part requires experiments on humans; on the other hand, as it involves human persons of inalienable rights, it cannot be left to the discretion of scientists or experts alone, other-wise it would lead to great abuse and exploitation. Hence it requires strict monitoring as well as strict guidelines, such as those of Nuremberg Code, Declaration of Helsinki, International Ethical Guide-lines issued by CIOMS and WHO and of our own ICMR.

Experimentation on human persons, especially in the field of medicine is a hotly discussed issue today in Kerala. Much discussion on this issue is triggered by a controversial drug-testing on cancer patients in the Regional Cancer Centre, Thiruvananthapuram. Medicine is an experimental science by its very nature. Significant advances in medical science today would not have been achieved without research and experimentation. The diagnosis of an illness and its treatment imply a certain element of experimentation. The doctor has to evaluate how the patient responds to a particular medicine. Experimentation on human subjects in the medical field means not only merely trying to cure a patient through various treatments but the deliberate research on human beings to gain medical knowledge for benefit of the society. Experts in the medical field point out that modern medicine could not have developed without experimentation on human beings. To improve

diagnostic and therapeutic procedures, biomedical research, which at least partly based on experimentation on human beings, is necessary. This is the ethical legitimization for experimentation on human persons. Nobody can question the use or benefits of medical research on human beings.

1. Use of experimentation on human persons

Dr. M. S. Valiathan who was Director of Sree Chitra Institute of Medical Sciences and Technology and Professor of Cardiac Surgery and former Vice-Chancellor of Manipal Academy of Higher Education emphatically states that clinical trials are essential for making progress in medical field in order to develop new drugs, devices, vaccines, diagnostic methods etc. He thinks that if the clinical trials are restricted too rigidly, there would be little scope for innovations in the field of medicine. But at the same time, he points out that if research in this field is unrestricted, there could be chaos and human exploitation. In doing clinical research, he insists, one has to observe strictly the national guidelines and observe very closely what is happening in the field of biomedical research at the international level.¹ While pointing out the benefits of research in human subjects in the field of medicine, scientists, physicians and ethicists become more and more aware of the possibility of commercial and profit considerations in the field of medicine and drug development, which have to be regulated properly.

Biomedical research on human subjects can be either clinical or therapeutic or non-clinical or non-therapeutic. Clinical research is combined with diagnostic treatments or prevention of illness in the research subjects themselves. It is medical research aimed directly at discovering better methods of diagnosing or treating or preventing disease. Non-clinical research on the other hand is not directly related to treating a patient. It is conducted to obtain further medical knowledge beneficial to the society as a whole.

Scientific experimentation has entered areas that are most sensitive and risky. One of the areas of medicine where wide range of research is going on is the field of human genetics largely fuelled by the Genome project. These fields of research promise great advantages for the whole human life providing information including genetic disorders, risk of future disease, disability and even early death. In addition, these tests may reveal genetic information not only about the health of the individual

but also about his or her family members as a whole. It helps to identify the genetic diseases or genetic disorders and to correct them. Gene therapy experiments are becoming more and more widespread today because of its valuable contribution in the field of medicine.

At the same time legitimate investigators in the field of medicine are becoming increasingly sensitive to mounting public sensitivity. Even these are dissuaded from morally proper and important researches because of fear of legal action. The investigators alone must not be forced to bear the burden for advancing the common good. The investigators have the right to be protected against legal actions from alleged or actual injury caused to the subject in valid experimentation. Hospitals, research institutions, universities etc., must provide legal and insurance protection to the participants in legitimate research for unpredicted or unexpected consequences.²

2. Misuse of experimentation on human persons

Cases of clinical research have been reported where there are clear violations of the trust of the patient on the physician. There can be plenty of research in which the physician attempts to evaluate a medical procedure or a new drug in his practice without controls or proper means for objective evaluation. There are also incidents of researches where the participants are subjected to experiments which are useless, costly and even very risky. These forms of research on human beings can hardly be considered scientific. They also involve gross neglect or violation of medical ethics.

Historically several incidents have been pointed out as serious cases of abuse of human beings in the field of experimentation. After the World War II, the world was horrified to learn that Nazi physicians had conducted experiments indiscriminately on human persons confined to the Nazi concentration camps, against their consent. Physicians who are supposed to be the protectors of patients used them for selfish interests. In the same way in 1930s and 1940s the Japanese scientists in collaboration with the military officers conducted experimentation on the civilians of occupied China and Manchuria exposing them to infectious diseases in order to gain information with regard to biological warfare. Victims were injected with germs of diseases like cholera, typhoid etc. or they were also given various fluids and foods containing such germs without their knowledge. The victims either succumbed to

the disease and died or they were 'sacrificed' later because they were no longer viable test materials.³

In the United States the Tuskegee Syphilis study on African-American men (1930-72) is another classical example of abuse of human persons subjected to medical experimentation. The Public Health Service department and the Tuskegee Institute started the research to cure syphilis but it turned out to be a study of untreated syphilitic patients from the beginning of the disease resulting in the death of infected persons. Although penicillin, which was proper medicine for syphilis, was widely available by 1946, the subjects of Tuskegee experiments never received it. Later enquiries proved that this medical study conducted by US government in co-operation with Tuskegee Institute used the poor, uneducated African-Americans as "guinea pigs".⁴ By that time some of the untreated patients died and others had developed terrible effects of tertiary syphilis. It is also known that between 1944-1974 US government sponsored several thousand radiation experiments on human beings to advance biomedical science or for defense interests. Later on it was known that several persons died after radiation or contracted serious diseases as a result of radiation.⁵

Clinical trials are necessary in so far as they promote the interests of health care. But as we have seen above, this field is subjected to serious possibility of exploitation of human persons. Certain modern situations have opened more possibilities of misuse in the field of research in the medical field. There can be conflict of interests of the group which developed a medicine and those evaluating it in human subjects. Pharmaceuticals, which spend millions to develop a product, would naturally want to maximize their profits. On the other hand, the medical institution, which evaluated it, also need money and also must protect the welfare of the patients or experimental subjects. If the institution or researchers focus solely on economic benefit, it can lead to the exploitation and sacrifice of the experimental subjects. Therefore, the possibility of abuse of the experimental subject is very high. It is also pointed out that in the past few years, this issue has become pressing because medical researchers themselves seem to have promoted firms which produce medicine more than their patients or research subjects.⁶

Besides, institutions and firms in the affluent developed countries seem to exploit medical institutions and researchers in the third world countries and take advantage of this situation. As experts in the field of

medicine point out, developing countries are becoming favored destinations for clinical research for the following reasons: large population, low cost, ignorance about the legal and ethical issues of human trials among the public and even among the health professionals, enthusiasm of developing countries to collaborate with the western world at any cost etc.⁷

3. Hopkins - RCC drug experimentation on cancer patients

Experimenting a particular chemical developed in Johns Hopkins university in US on the oral cancer patients in RCC has become very controversial recently. This has been pointed out as a typical case of illegal and unethical experimentation on human beings in co-operation with a foreign institution. If this is true this is a typical case of exploitation of the poor, illiterate cancer patients of RCC. Hence our interest in this study.

Two chemicals M4N (tetra-O-Metliyl nor-dihydro quaiaretic acid) and G4N (tetraglycinyl nor-dihydro quaiaretic acid), derivatives of nor-dihydro-quaiaretic acid (NDGA) developed by a biologist at Johns Hopkins university in U.S. have been experimented on cancer patients in RCC. It is said that the first ever human trials of these two chemicals were conducted on 26 oral cancer patients, awaiting surgical treatment at the RCC, between Nov. 12, 1999 and April 8, 2000. It seems that these chemicals were brought to India without proper authorization. It is also known that the majority of the patients who were subjected to this drug trial simply thought that the injections they received were only part of their treatment. They have not realized the fact that the injections were given as part of an experiment to prove the effectiveness of certain chemicals in treating some forms of cancer. That means these patients were subjected to this experiment without proper consent. It is said that JHU had selected RCC for clinical trials because of the availability of large number of poor illiterate patients who could be easily manipulated to undergo this test. The main accusation against RCC is that it used poor patients as guinea pigs. The patients, most of them illiterate, agreed to be injected in the belief that they would be cured.⁸

It is indicated that NDGA from which M4N and G4N are manufactured is a chemical banned by the Food and Drug Administration of US. Besides, these chemicals had only been tested in rats. Therefore,

experimenting them, on patients in the preliminary stages of cancer for the first time, RCC had by-passed all the previous phases of human trials including tests on patients in the terminal stages of cancer. From this perspective the medical research conducted in RCC on cancer patients is characterized by some doctors in RCC itself as unethical practice involving first time trials of chemicals on human beings.⁹

It is also evident that RCC had received funds from JHU for conducting clinical research on cancer patients using the chemicals coming from JHU. It is also said that JHU in turn is funded by a Minnesota based company. Biocure Medical, which wants to conduct clinical trials on compounds derived from the so called NDGA.¹⁰ Therefore, the experimentation on cancer patients in RCC seems to be merely at the interests of these agencies than the benefit of the cancer patients themselves.

The most important accusation against RCC in this drug experimentation is that it has not observed the normal regulations to be followed in any clinical research. The normal procedure for obtaining approval for clinical research (phase I, II and III) in India is to submit the toxicological data collected from prior animal experimentation to the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI). He sends this toxicological data to the Indian Council of Medical Research's (ICMR.) Toxicology Committee for evaluation. If found to be safe, the DCGI gives sanction for phase I trials. Ranjith Roy Choudhury, Chairman of the ICMR Toxicology Committee said that they had not received any proposal from RCC for experimenting any drug on cancer patients or any data regarding the proposed phase I clinical trial on cancer patients.¹¹

Clinical research conducted in RCC also does not seem to follow the directives of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act in India. According to this Act phase I trials (the kind of trial conducted in RCC) for new drug substances discovered in other countries cannot be usually allowed to be conducted in India unless phase I data from other countries are available.¹² Even without phase I data from U.S from where M4N and G4N have been imported the DCGI has given approval for the drug experimentation on February 2001 for drug trials already conducted between November 12, 1999 and April 8, 2000. On what basis did the DCGI has given approval for that clinical research in RCC? Again is this a permission for clinical trials already conducted or for a II phase of

experiment? ICMR had brought out a base document on ethical guidelines for biomedical research on human subjects in September, 2000 and according to these guidelines, all guiding principles should be followed irrespective of whether the drug has been developed in this country or abroad, whether clinical trials have been carried out outside India or not. The only body which seems to have sanctioned the drug trial in RCC is their own ethical committee. But those who investigate this issue is of the opinion that ethical committee in RCC is also not a body properly constituted.

Another observation of the irregularity in the drug trial in RCC is that after injecting particular doses of these chemicals to the cancer patients, tissues from the patients were taken to Hopkins university for further testing which is also not legally approved. Although RCC researchers claimed that there was no harm done to the patients and the injections of these drugs had substantially reduced the extent of the cancerous turnours, there was no evidence of continuous monitoring of the patients. Most of them were sent home after the drug-injected tumours were surgically removed. Some of them could not be traced afterwards and a few of them died. Therefore, what has happened in RCC cannot be considered a biomedical research at all. It seems that the drug has been tested in India, a third world country only because there were stricter rules in United States.

Even though the Hopkins-RCC drug trial incident is under investigation and we are waiting for the reports, from the above factors known through investigation so far, many eminent persons in the medical profession and ethical field, have come to the conclusion that the research conducted in cancer patients in RCC cannot be legally and ethically tolerated and it is an evident case of abuse of poor and illiterate patients on the pretext of drug trial for the selfish interests of certain persons and institutions. It is pointed out that RCC incident is not an isolated event. The testing of drugs or clinical research phase I and phase II (to gather data on the safety and efficacy of drug respectively) are taking place on a large scale even in institutions and clinics which are not equipped properly for such experiments. In the absence of arrangements for proper monitoring and supervising biomedical research, we do not know the magnitude of the problem. Experts in the field point out that there are even instances of using banned drugs for treating different diseases.¹³

It is not a secret today that many reputed academic institutions which conduct clinical research have commercial ties with multinational pharmaceutical companies. They are flooding the Indian market with wide range of drugs. Drug manufacturers profit enormously out of this situation. The situation is worsened by the emergence of contract research organizations who take up contracts for organized clinical trials and provide related services from pre-clinical stage to the marketing of the drug for the pharmaceuticals. In that situation it is self-evident that they will be safeguarding more the interests of drug manufacturers than that of the patients. And in such situations we cannot deny the possibility of clear exploitation and even abuse of the patients under the pretext of biomedical research even by those who are supposed to cure them.

4. A wake-up call for India

According to Dr. K. Mohandas, the Director of Sree-Chitra Institute of Medical Sciences and Technology, the Hopkins-RCC drug trial incident is a wake-up call for India. That means in the global context of unethical practices in research involving human subjects, the demand for strict monitoring and strict guidelines governing such experimentation becomes a must today. Experts observe that in India the licensing procedures and requirements for clinical trials is in a rudimentary stage. They are not adequately revised to meet the more dynamic research environments today, especially in the field of biomedicine. The vast and growing field of clinical research in India remains mostly unmonitored. This is not mainly because of the lack of guidelines. The fault lies with drug control and medical research bureaucracy that has to enforce these guidelines.¹⁴ The net result is that individuals and Institutions seem to take advantage of the situation at the expense of the research subjects and the poor patients.

Eminent medical practitioners suggest that monitoring of biomedical research has to be strengthened at the institutional level based on the well formulated principles enunciated in the Helsinki declaration, the guidelines issued jointly by the Council for International Organization of Medical Science and the World Health Organization and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR). Each institution has to follow clear guidelines to evaluate research on human subjects and take proper measures to protect them from possible harm. It is said that ICMR is planning to set up training centers in several parts of the country to

provide support to institutions and professionals on the ethical issues involved in human research. If the institutions follow meticulously the ethical safety guidelines in human research, India need not be afraid of international collaborations, multinational pharmaceuticals or contract research organizations.

5. Guidelines for research on human subjects

The codes and guidelines were gradually formulated to direct research on human persons, because of the misuse of such experimentations.

5.1 Nuremberg Code

After the World War II, it was known to the world that the Nazi physicians have brutally subjected the prisoners in the concentration camps to various experimentations against their consent. Similar exploitation of helpless people on the pretext of medical research have been conducted by the Japanese and the Americans as we have seen earlier. In Nuremberg trial (1946-47) the judges reacted strongly against the inhuman and lethal experiments conducted on unconsenting subjects confined to Nazi concentration camps. The Nazi war crimes horrified the world. It led to the realization that medical science could be abused and that great care must be taken to protect the welfare of the human persons who are subjected to medical care. In reaction to the Nazi exploitation the Nuremberg Code was formulated in 1946, to provide some minimal protection for human beings who were subjects of experiment.

The Nuremberg Code requires that nobody should be subjected to experimentation without his or her voluntary consent. That means there should not be any element of force, fraud or deceit. The experiment also should be based on prior animal experimentation as to avoid unnecessary harm to the subject. The good effect expected should exceed the risk involved. Experiment should be conducted only by a scientifically qualified person. And finally the subject should be free to withdraw from any stage of the experiment, if he finds that it leads to certain dangers to health or to life.¹⁵ The Nuremberg Code formed the basis for another set of elaborate guidelines in the field of medical research, known as declaration of Helsinki.

5.2 Declaration of Helsinki (1964)

Elaborate guidelines prepared by the World Medical Association for

biomedical research involving human subjects have been accepted by the 18th World Medical Assembly, Helsinki, FinLand, in 1964. Therefore this is known as Declaration of Helsinki of the World Medical Association.¹⁶ This declaration has three parts namely the basic principles, guidelines specific to non-clinical research and guidelines specific to clinical research.

5.2.1 Basic Principles

(1) Biomedical research involving human subjects must confirm to generally accepted scientific principles and should be based on adequate laboratory and animal experimentation.

(2) The design and performance of each experimental procedure involving human subjects should be clearly formulated in an experimental protocol, which should be submitted for the considerations, comment and guidance of a specially appointed committee independent of the investigator and sponsor.

(3) It should be conducted only by scientifically qualified persons and under the strict supervision of a clinically competent medical person.

(4) The objective of the research should be in proportion to the inherent risk to the subject.

(5) The right of the subject to safeguard his or her physical and mental integrity should be always respected.

(6) If the risks are found to outweigh the potential benefits the researcher should stop any investigation.

(7) In any research on human being the subject must be adequately informed of the aims, methods, anticipated benefits and potential risks etc. so that the informed consent of the subject is obtained.

(8) If the subject is a dependent of the researcher, informed consent should be obtained by another person who is not involved in the research.

(9) In the case of minor, mentally incompetent etc. the informed consent must be obtained from the legal guardian.

(10) In the publication of the results, the researcher is obliged to preserve the accuracy of the results.

(11) The research protocol should contain a statement of the ethical considerations involved and should indicate that the principles enunciated in the present Declaration are complied with.

Apart from the basic guidelines, Helsinki declaration provides specific guidelines also for clinical and non-clinical research involving human subjects. As we have mentioned earlier the scope of clinical or therapeutic experimentation is essentially diagnostic or therapeutic in nature and it is conducted on patients. The objective of non-therapeutic or non-clinical research is to obtain scientific knowledge in the field of medicine without implying direct diagnostic or therapeutic value to the persons subjected to the research. Here the subject can be a patient or a terminally ill or a healthy person.

5.2.2. Guidelines for clinical or therapeutic biomedical research involving human subjects:

Apart from the general guidelines mentioned above, any clinical research should pay attention also to the following principles.

- (1) In the treatment of the sick person, the physician must be free to use a new diagnostic and therapeutic measure, if it offers hope of saving life, reestablishing health or alleviating suffering.
- (2) In any clinical research, every patient should be assured of the best proven diagnostic and therapeutic method.
- (3) The refusal of a patient to participate in a research must never interfere with the physician-patient relationship.
- (4) If the physician considers it essential not to obtain informed consent, the specific reason for this should be stated in the experimental protocol submitted to the independent committee.
- (5) The physician can combine medical research with professional care for obtaining new medical knowledge, only to the extent that such medical research is justified by its potential diagnostic or therapeutic value for the patient.

5.2.3. Guidelines for non-clinical or non-therapeutic medical research:

- (1) In a bio-medical research carried out on a human being, the researcher should remain the protector of the life and health of that person.
- (2) The subjects should be volunteers - either healthy persons or patients.
- (3) The investigator should discontinue the research if he thinks that it would be harmful to the subjects if he continues the research.

(4) In a research on a human being, the interests of science or society should not take precedence over the well-being of the subject.

5.3 International Ethical Guidelines for Biomedical Research Involving Human Subjects (1993)

This is a set of guidelines formulated in 1993 by the Council for International Organizations of Medical Sciences (CIOMS) in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO).¹⁷ These international ethical guidelines further refine the Helsinki declaration on biomedical research. These guidelines illustrate the international consensus in ethics of human research. It is also attentive to the issue that may arise when human research is conducted by one country in another country, especially in a third world setting. We will return to this question while dealing with the ethical issues involved in experimentation on human persons.

6. Ethical requirements of medical experimentation on human subjects

6.1 Human Person is not mere object

The basic moral problem in experimentation involving human subjects is that it is the use of one person by another to gather knowledge in the field of medicine. There is a legitimate reason for conducting experimentation on a person for acquiring medical knowledge beneficial for him or the society as a whole. But no person can be exploited or merely sacrificed for the benefit of the society. The dignity of the experimental subject has to be safeguarded always. He can never be used as a means or merely as an object to be manipulated for research purposes. Human person can be subjected to experimentation only under the strict observations of national and international guidelines. Any experimentation which is detrimental to the physical and mental integrity of the subject is immoral irrespective of the good result intended. And because of the same reason, there is limitation for the experimental subject himself volunteering for an experimentation irrespective of his concern for good of the society. Responsible stewardship requires that he has to maintain his own physical and mental integrity beyond everything else.

6.2 Due proportion between good achieved and evil permitted

If available evidence indicates that the proposed experimentation

can lead to serious injury, mutilation, personality change or death, no one can be justified in volunteering to submit to the experiment regardless of his or her dedication for common good. For other types of experiments which seems to be beneficial for the patient or humanity as a whole, a distinction must be made between healthy persons, incurable patients and curable patients. The healthy persons and incurable patients do not normally benefit by the experimentation although it is meant for achieving further medical knowledge beneficial for the society as a whole. However, experimentation on curable patients may serve a double purpose namely, recovery or improvement of his own health and also advancement in medical practice.

From this perspective, normally a healthy person or incurable patient is ethically permitted to submit him/herself to an experiment if there is reasonable hope that medical science will benefit in the process, if all other guidelines are strictly observed. A sick person or curable patient may consent to participate in an experimental procedure only when he foresees that there is a due proportion between the good effect intended and evil effect which is permitted. That proportion here is between the cure of the patient and advancement of medical knowledge. The evil is the possible inconvenience or injury to the patient subjected to the experiment. The intended good effect in human experimentation includes the possibility of curing or improving the condition of the patient and also acquiring further medical knowledge. But this good intended will not suffice to justify the experimentation on human persons if the danger to the subject is out of proportion.

6.3. Informed consent

The most decisive factor for the justification of the risk in experimentation on human subjects is the informed consent of the subjects. Informed consent means that the person should be in a position to exercise free choice without intervention of any element of force, fraud, deceit or coercion. In order to elicit an informed consent or to make an enlightened decision the subject has the right to receive adequate informations regarding the aims and methods of research, expected duration of the participation of the subject, the expected benefit to the participant and others from the research, foreseeable risks to the subject etc. Informed consent is the most important requirement of experimentation on human persons because it is only then the experimenter respects the dignity of the subject and his freedom of

consent. It is also the most important safety measure against manipulation of human subjects in biomedical research.

There is a vast difference between extorting consent by overwhelming psychological suggestions through false informations and gaining consent through completely objective informations. Deliberate deception of the subject in the area of experimentation is morally wrong. To give false or less than full information in the recruitment of volunteers of experimentation is ethically unjustifiable. The good end of the experiment does not justify the evil means of deception.¹⁸ Experimentation on patients without due consent is morally objectionable, and even the moral right of the patient to consent is limited by his duty of safeguarding his physical and mental integrity. As a rule, the informed consent has to be obtained in written form in order to avoid exploitation in this area.

If informed consent is the most important ethical requirement of experimentation on human subjects, how can we explain experiments on people who are incompetent to give an informed consent? If a person cannot understand the information given by the experimenter even in non-technical language at his educational level, he is incompetent to give an informed consent. This is the situation of the experiments on children, mentally incompetent, neurotics etc. Normally they have to be excluded as experimental subjects for lack of informed consent. However, moralists in general agree that these incompetent persons can be subjected to therapeutic experimentations intended to benefit such people. But in order to avoid abuses in this field the proxy consent of the parents or legal guardian has to be obtained.

Another area of growing interest in biomedical research today is the experimentation with human embryos, especially in the effort to develop the embryonic stem cells as a source of treating certain diseases as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's etc. From a moral point of view experimentation with human embryos can be conducted only for a therapeutic reason. High risk experimental procedures can be undertaken only for purely therapeutic purposes as the only available measure to save the life of that particular foetus. According to the recent CDF instruction, "If the embryos are living whether viable or not, they must be respected like any other human person; experimentation on an embryo which is not directly therapeutic is illicit... To use human embryos or foetuses as the object or instrument of experimentation constitutes a crime against their dignity as human beings..."¹⁹

Precautions should be taken also when prisoners are used as experimental subjects. There should not be any element of compulsion. They are entitled, as anybody else, to receive honest and objective information so that they can give a proper informed consent. In the past prisoners have been used for various sort of biomedical research. The possibility of pressure or force to subject them to experiments is very real in the prison atmosphere. The Nuremberg Code clearly states the ethical principle that no human being, not even prisoners may be forced to be the subjects of experimentation.²⁰

7. Conclusion

It is pointed out that the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) remains powerless to enforce the guidelines with regard to research in the field of biomedical research. Neither the ICMR nor the Drug Controller nor the Medical Council has the authority to enforce codes of research ethics in the institutions. Legislation related to drugs and cosmetics has little to say on drug testing and prescribes no guidelines. In this context, it is very difficult to take action on an institution which does not follow the guidelines of ICMR. The lack of local research funding combined with the lack of strict guidelines can easily lead to situations similar to that of RCC drug trial, where the dignity and the rights of the experimental subjects can be brutally disregarded.²¹

We strongly feel that monitoring in the field of biomedical research has to be strengthened at the institutional level. Proper guidelines of biomedical research, based on the well laid-out principles enunciated in the Helsinki declaration and the international guidelines issued by International Organization of Medical Science and World Health Organization, should be enforced. ICMR has to be further strengthened so that it can supervise and control the field of biomedical research and enforce the national and international guidelines in this field. There must be provision also for proper penalisation of the individuals and institutions who violate the guidelines in experimentations on human subjects.

It seems that there is a welcoming change happening in India on the same lines. Recently ICMR revised extensively its ethical guidelines for biomedical research as per the recommendations of the central ethical committee headed by justice M.N. Venkatachaliah, taking into consideration the newer areas of research. ICMR has brought out the new ethical guidelines for biomedical research on human subjects in

Sept.2000. There are also strong suggestions that ICMR should have continuous interactions with international agencies like the Council for International Organizations of Medical Science, which is keen to review continuously and update ethical guidelines for biomedical research.

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Foot Notes

- (1) Dr. M. S. Valiathan, "Clinical Trials should promote health care", in *Frontline*, August 31, 2001, p.13
- (2) S. E. Lammers and A. Verhey (eds.), *On Moral Medicine, Theological Perspectives in Medical Ethics*, Michigan, 1989, p 606.
- (3) T. L. Beauchamp and L. Walters (eds). *Contemporary Issues in Bioethics*, New York, 1999, p.470- 478.
- (4) Ibid. p 463-470.
- (5) Ibid. P. 431. In 1994 then American President Clinton appointed an advisory committee to uncover the history of this human radiation experiments. The Committee presented its report in 1995 stating that there was cruel misuse of human persons in this radiation experiments.
- (6) Dr. M. S. Valiathan, "Clinical Trials should promote health", p.13.
- (7) "Trial and Error", Kerala's Regional Cancer Centre's Experiment with truth. Continues", in *The Week*, August 12, 2001, p.32.
- (8) R. Krishnakumar, "Drug Trials and Ethics" in *Frontline*, August 31, 2001, p. 6
- (9) "Trial and Error," p.32.
- (10) R. Ramachandran, "Claims and Contradictions" in *Frontline*, August 31, 2001, p.11.
- (11) Ibid., p.12.
- (12) According to the Act such trials may be permitted in the absence of phase I data from other countries if the drug is of special relevance to the health problems of India. And this is not the case in the present incident.
- (13) "Ethics in Medical Research", in *Economic and Political Weekly*, August 18, 2001, p.3099-3100.
- (14) Ibid., p.3099; R. Krishnakumar, "The changing creed", in *Frontline* August 31, 2001, p.10

- (15) T. L. Beauchamp and L. Walters (eds.), *Contemporary Issues in Bioethics*, p.433.
- (16) 1964 declaration of Helsinki had been amended in 1975, 1983, 1989 and the final version is the one approved by the 48th general Assembly of World Medical Association in Somerset, S. Africa, 1996. For a complete version of Declaration of Helsinki (1996) see T.L Beauchamp and L. Waters (eds.) *Contemporary Issues in Bioethics*, p. 434-436.
- (17) For details see *Ibid.* p.436-440.
- (18) A. C. Varga, *The Main Issues in Bioethics*, New York, 1980, P.157; see the requirements of informed consent given by the international ethical guidelines for biomedical research. T.L.Beauchamp and L. Waters (eds.) *Contemporary Issues in Bioethics*, p. 438.
- (19) CDF, "Instruction on Respect for human life in its origin and on the dignity of procreation", Vatican, 1987.
- (20) A. C. Varga, *The Main Issues in Bioethics*, p.159.
- (21) "Ethics in Medical Research", p.3099.

Fertility Techniques: Promise or Danger?

Felix Podimattam

The author of the article restricts his masterly treatment of the topic to two points: one, Cloning and two, Genome Revolution, which are the recent Fertility techniques hotly discussed today among scientists and ethicists. Cloning is the reproduction of an identical twin or a carbon copy of a person from whom the cell nucleus is taken to activate the ovum. Human Genome Project is the mapping out of the three billion 'letters' in the DNA code of trillions of cells in the human body. It goes without saying that these achievements and techniques, since they involve the human person of inalienable rights, raise serious ethical issues which have to be carefully discussed and that is what the author has ably done.

The history of the relation between the Catholic Church and medical progress is one of a series of unnecessary tensions. Almost invariably, when a major change in the conceptual framework of medicine occurred, its acceptance by the Church was delayed by decades, if not longer. Then there is an acceptance of the new framework, and an adoption of the new ways of thought. But, in the meantime, there is almost always a period when a response which bears most of the marks of panic appears.

Seemingly, all the signs point to a more than usual degree of difficulty in Catholic thought adapting itself to the language and concepts of new reproductive technologies or fertility techniques.

This article is written in the hope that it will somehow prevent the withdrawal of our community from the field of fertility techniques and that, on the contrary, it will encourage people to enter research in what is one of the most exciting disciplines of our time from a philosophical and biological standpoint.

This article comprises two sections: one, cloning and two, genome revolution which are the most recent reproductive technologies of fertility techniques. Sex selection, artificial insemination and in vitro fertilization have been left out for want of space. Moreover, these topics have amply been discussed in theological literature.

I. Cloning

Human cloning is an issue of immediate, urgent, and universal importance and is perhaps the greatest ethical challenge of the new millennium.

Cloning is the production of a genetically identical duplicate of an organism. Concretely, it is a form of genetic engineering in which the nucleus of an unfertilized ovum is removed and replaced by the nucleus of some other, not necessarily sexual, cell from another adult. The result is that the ovum will develop into an identical twin or carbon copy of the person from whom the cell-nucleus was taken to activate the ovum. This process of cloning is a completely non-sexual form of reproduction. What are the ethical perspectives of human cloning?

Grave Immorality of Human Cloning in General

At present there seems to be a fairly widespread unanimity among Christian (and many other) moralists that human cloning is gravely immoral and that for a variety of reasons.

First, cloning would render the male unnecessary as far as procreation is concerned. The male sperm becomes unnecessary for producing the new being. The donor nucleus can come from a cell of the woman herself; the egg-cell obviously comes from the woman. So the man has absolutely no role to play!

Second, an adverse consequence of human cloning is that it will undermine seriously the preciousness of life. If human life can be mass produced, then life becomes cheap. In such a society killing and getting killed will not matter much.. People will not be afraid to die because an exact duplicate of theirs can be produced easily, and so death will involve no serious loss.

Third, a widening of the class disparity is another alarming consequence of the spread of human cloning. Employing technology at its best this procedure will be forbiddingly expensive for the ordinary,

rendering it a monopoly of the super rich. As reported earlier, the production of Dolly cost \$ 750,000. Thanks to this technique, the super rich may be able to selectively produce offsprings with the best and most desirable qualities, who can excel in every field.

Fourth, the ill-effects of human cloning will affect families too. The family is built on close interpersonal relationships based on deep and genuine love. Sexual interaction and consequent bringing forth of children are fundamental for knitting the family together in mutual love and respect. The bond between spouses is kept alive by love, sexual union, and the generation of children. With cloning the generation of a new person need not involve mutual union of love and sex, resulting in a weakening of the bond between husband and wife, parents and children. Destabilization of the family will be the natural consequence.¹

Fifth, there is also the fear that cloning could be abused in the hands of dictators, who could create armies of slaves or a master race.

Sixth, a large number of bio-ethicists declared that they oppose human cloning as a morally unjustifiable intrusion into human life. World religious leaders are definitely against the idea of human cloning. A Time Magazine poll (March 10, 1997) reported that 74% of those asked believe human cloning is against God's will.

Such formidable arguments would seem to leave little room for anything but a firm negative moral verdict on the cloning of human beings in general.

Probable Lictness of Human Cloning in Exceptional Cases

We need to maintain a cautious approach to human cloning in such exceptional cases as infertile couples; as the control of a child's sex by cloning to avoid any one of 50 sex-linked genetic diseases; as meeting a family's survival need; and as saving endangered humans such as the Hairy Ainu in northern Japan or certain strains of Romani gypsies. Besides, if the common good were served by it, would it not be justifiable to specialize the capacities of at least a few people by cloning? For a dash of fanciful exercise, if a cloned Hippocrates could invent the cure for AIDS, would it be immoral not to try to clone him?

Turning to justifying arguments, to begin with, in nature, humans not excepted, clones already exist. As stated earlier, a clone is an organism that has the same genetic information as another organism. From this

we can say that cloning occurs with plants, some insects, algae, unicellular organisms that conduct mitosis and binary fissions, and occasionally by all multicellular organisms. Think about seedless grapes or navel oranges - if there are no seeds, where did they come from? It is the plant equivalent of virgin birth - which is to say that they are all clones, propagated by cutting a shoot and planting it. Wine is almost entirely a cloned product. Some organisms in nature only reproduce using cloning. Not only bacteria and yeast, but also larger organisms like some snails and shrimps. Many more species reproduce by cloning most of the time.²

Incidentally, more clones are present in the world among humans than one would imagine. Identical twins are clones of each other and have been around since the beginning of human existence. They have the same exact genetic information due to division of an embryo early in development which produces two identical embryos. Indeed, 4,000 identical twins are born every day somewhere in the world.³

Second, reproduction through non-sexual means is not unknown in history. Parthenogenesis which involves stimulating an unfertilized egg to grow into a new being has been known for a long time.

Third, what exactly is so bad about cloning? Obviously, human beings have a right to reproduce. Nobody has any right to tell other people they shouldn't have children. Essentially all reproduction is done these days with medical help at delivery, and often before.

True, some forms of medical help are more invasive than others. With in vitro fertilization, the sperm and egg are combined in the lab and surgically implanted in the womb.

Less than two decades ago, a similar concern was raised over the ethical issues involved in "test-tube babies." To date, more than 30,000 such babies have been born in the United States alone. Many would-be parents have been made happy. Who has been harmed?⁴

Fourth, cloning, after all, is similar to IVF. The only difference is that the DNA of sperm would be replaced by DNA from an adult cell. Now, to come to our point, what law or principle says that one combination of genetic material in a flask is alright, but another is not?⁵

Fifth, the benefits of cloning sometimes can outweigh the risks, and the dangers thereof are not as great as people fear.

There are several authors who do not see anything unethical in human cloning as such. Ronald Bailey asks, what exactly is wrong with cloning humans? Which ethical principle does cloning violate? Stealing? Lying? Coveting? Murdering? What?

According to Jesuit moral and pastoral theologian John Mahoney, a member of the International Theological Commission and the Principal of Heythrop College in the University of London where he also lectured in moral and pastoral theology, “in principle there seems nothing inherently threatening in the genetic duplication which is at the heart of such a technology” and consequently, he adds, “its ethical value is to be assessed in terms similar to that of artificial gestation ...”⁶

As long as we make sure that the cloned are cherished no less than the naturally conceived, as long as we make sure that they are born into a loving family, there is no reason to assume that they will differ from any other child, except in their origin.

Finally, in considering the morality of human cloning in exceptional cases, with John Mahoney we affirm that the one value which might be considered paramount is love of one’s neighbour. Whatever will truly help, enhance or improve the lot of my neighbour is automatically the will of God, who loves my neighbour much more than I ever can, and who, as Aquinas observes, has imparted to rational humans a share of his own providence in order for them to take foresight for themselves and others (ST, 1-11, 91, 2).

II. The Genome Revolution

Preliminary Data

The following glossary will help ground the reader in the terms used throughout this section.

Etymologically the word genome has been created by elision of two words “gene” (gen-) and “chromosome” (-ome), meaning the complete set of chromosomes and genes. The genome is a complete set of coded instructions for making and maintaining an organism. It is made up of the chemical DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid). The genome is an organism’s complete set of DNA.

All the instructions needed to direct the activities of the cells (the fundamental working units of every living system) are contained within

the chemical DNA. DNA is the chemical that stores coded information on how, when, and where an organism should make the many thousands of different proteins required for life. Proteins are essential for all aspects of life. All organisms are made up largely of proteins. Although genes get a lot of attention, it is the proteins that perform most life functions. Proteins are large, complex molecules made up of smaller subunits called amino acids. Twenty different kinds of amino acids are usually found in proteins.

Chromosomes are pieces of DNA. There are 46 such pieces of DNA in the complete human genome. Humans receive a set of 23 chromosomes from each parent. A complete set of 46 chromosomes is found in almost everyone of our trillions of cells.

Genes are pieces of DNA that contain instructions for building a particular protein. Through these proteins, our genes dictate not only how we look but also how well we process foods, detoxify poisons, and respond to infections.

Genes constitute only a tiny fraction, a mere 3 percent of our DNA. The gene (coding) regions in our DNA are interspersed among millions of non-coding DNA bases whose functions are still largely unknown. Scientists until the recent genome revolution estimated that we have from 80,000 to 100,000 genes. The latest discovery takes this tally to $\frac{1}{3}$ of this.

The Human Genome Project (HGP) began in 1986 as a way for scientists in the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) to use newly developing DNA analytical technologies to fulfill a long-standing mandate from Congress to assess the health effects of radiation. For decades DOE and its predecessors have developed international standards for the use of advanced medical diagnostic tools and treatments involving radiation and the protection of workers in the federal and civilian nuclear industry.

As the potential benefits of human genetics research became more apparent, Congress requested that DOE and the U. S. National Institutes of Health develop a joint genome project. The U.S. Human Genome Project began formally in 1990 with expanded goals to describe all human genetic material (DNA) by 2005. However, rapid technological achievements advanced the expected completion date to 2003, and a draft product was anticipated by 2000. International research teams,

particularly those from the United Kingdom but also from France, Germany, and Japan joined U.S. scientists to make significant contributions to the HGP.

Today researchers worldwide are using HGP data and powerful analytical technologies to devise creative applications in an expanding array of fields. The claims and promises of these new capabilities are diverse and bold. But the new technologies and the data they generate also present complex ethical and policy issues that individuals and society, including courts, have begun to confront.

Many of the new genetic discoveries stem from data and tools generated by the massive international Human Genome Project (HGP), whose goal, as mentioned above, is to describe in intricate detail the DNA from humans and other selected organisms. Because DNA is the information molecule that carries instructions for creating and maintaining all life, resources and analytical technologies generated by the HGP and other genetic research can be applied to the DNA of all organisms on earth. Other important HGP goals are to develop tools for data analysis and to address some of the ethical, legal, and social issues that may arise from the project.

Ethical Issues

In this segment of ethical issues, we shall limit ourselves to explaining the benefits as also the dangers of genome research. Use has been made, in the following discussion, of the two extremely informative articles of the Indian Jesuit Job Kozhamthadam.⁷

Promises of Genome Research

The first 'working draft' of the entire human genetic code has possibly been the most sensational fundamental breakthrough in science since the Theory of Relativity by Albert Einstein in the second decade of the 20th century. It would still take years before the entire human genome is accurately sequenced but even at the current level, where 97 per cent of the genome has been sequenced, its potential for the good of humankind is limitless. The subject of genetic instructions is awesomely huge and mystifying - the search for the ultimate building block of the biological system and through a maze of intricately interlinked three billion "letters" in the DNA code in every one of the 100 trillion cells in the human body. This inward journey of science has revealed that each human being is a cosmos by him/herself.

The benefits of this breakthrough are practically incalculable. No other area has been so much affected by the genome revolution as the medical sciences, both qualitatively and quantitatively: qualitatively, a transformation in medical diagnosis and treatment is already afoot; quantitatively, cures to many more serious diseases are being developed. It is well known that in medicine correct and timely diagnosis is more than half the solution. We are well aware of the tremendous role X-ray, Cat Scan, MRI, etc., have been playing in alleviating human suffering by assisting in the fast and accurate diagnosis of complicated diseases. They help in locating the problem areas accurately. Genome will help to identify the problem spot even more accurately and reliably, and even suggest effective remedies. The degree of success in medicine is directly proportional to the extent the physician can eliminate guesswork. A genome report can go a long way in reducing guesswork in medical diagnosis and treatment. Since genomic information can identify possible problem spots, early detection and even prevention of diseases become possible. It becomes possible to fight diseases at the molecular level rather than at a far more complex and complicated tissue or organ level. The developments in genome may bring about a paradigm shift from a treatment-based to a prevention-based medicine, with immense gain both monetarily and psycho-physically. More specifically, it is reported that cancer research has identified more than 50,000 genes as related to some form of cancer. According to some other reports, genome may bring a ray of hope to sufferers of more than 6000 genetic diseases.

The genome revolution has some salutary consequences in the legal sphere as well. The power and accuracy of the genomic data can be used in giving an accurate and fair judgment on many intricate and delicate issues. For instance, it can be used to settle paternity and immigration suits. It can be a very reliable tool for identifying the actual culprit in a complex crime, so that the guilty will be punished and the innocent acquitted.

Second, the genome revolution can improve our attitude towards animals. One of the things genomic research has revealed is that the difference between humans and other animals is not so drastic; in fact, it is only a matter of degree. We have seen that humans share 98.4% of their genome with the chimpanzee, and a significant 75% with mouse. Similarly with other living beings. This would call for a respectful attitude towards animals.

Third, the genome revolution extends new support to continuing evolution in the universe. In such a universe humans have a very unique role to play, a role no other living being can play. Humans are capable of guiding the evolutionary process. Genetic engineering buttressed by the genome information gives tremendous power in the hands of humans to decide in what direction the development of humans should take place. Humans are beings empowered to decide the destiny of creation in some limited ways. They become in a way co-creators with God. Seen from this perspective, the developments in genome research seem to enhance the dignity of humans.

Fourth, the genetic decipherment points to and identifies our individuality as human beings, our uniqueness as separate persons, while also making startlingly clear our oneness with the rest of humanity. Very small variations in the genetic code are what make us unique, different from every other person.

That our individuality cannot be reduced to a matter of genetic code is evident from the exception to the rule, that is, the genetic makeup of identical twins. The shared genetic identity of identical twins does not mean two persons who are simply identical with one another. Personality, mind, spirit, and affects are shaped by many other things as well, and the significance of the genetic makeup must not be allowed to obscure the many other aspects of the human - both as a species and in our particularity - that belong to the work of the Creator.

Fifth, if, however, knowledge of the structure of the human genome heightens the knowledge of our individuality and its sources, it also underscores the commonality of the human race and our commonality with the rest of creation.

Recent developments in science in general, and in genetics in particular, reveal a paradigm shift in the way science is done: since as "an activity of the genius in isolation" is changing to "the activity of a community." The genome project was an excellent example of international collaboration in science. Teamwork and active collaboration cutting across geographical, racial, and cultural boundaries are being recognized as fundamental values in science too.

The human genome project was yet another testimony to the unity of science. In our world of super-specialization, it is important to remember that often breakthroughs in science are brought about by the

synthetic or unified approach. In this project we see so many different branches of science and so many different technologies and techniques coming together to assist each other to make this venture a success. Biology, genetics, robotics, computer technology, genetic engineering, cloning, etc., have worked hand in hand in the mega-project. The different branches of science, though diverse, reveal a deep unity.

Perhaps one of the deepest disclosures of the different discoveries in particle physics is the unity in diversity found in our universe. It was revealed that the whole material world is made up of the same fundamental particles like protons, neutrons, electrons, etc. The genome project and related developments show this unity and diversity in the world of the living beings as well. Just as atoms of different material elements are made up of the same fundamental particles, the DNA of differing beings is made up of the same kind of nucleotides. The human race has crossed the six billion mark some time ago. Despite such large numbers spread over many continents, cultures, and races, humans show a remarkable deeper unity in their biology.

Lastly, the recent surge of interest in genetics spurred by the announcement of the draft of the human genome, has brought the science-religion debate to the fore. The claims made by the media and certain scientists give the impression that the genome is well on the way to evicting God and religion from the face of the cosmos. “The secret of life has been revealed,” “the book of life has been deciphered,” “humans now know what only God knew,” etc., are just some examples of this ebullience.

But history seems to have proven false all the critics of theism and religion. According to a study conducted in 1997, 40% of the American scientists believe in a personal God - not merely an ineffable power and presence in the world, but a Deity to whom they can pray.⁸

Genome revolution throws light on evolution, the nature of God and the mode of divine action. The human genome, more than anything else, reveals the mastery and mystery of God. It reveals the creator's mastery over creation, at the same time, its complexity and intricacy become a baffling mystery to us humans. The sheer number involved is staggering.

All the trillions and trillions of cells are arranged in the most orderly manner to make the complex life possible. This is for just one human

being, and we have over six billion of them walking around on the planet. Can one say all these just happened and are still just happening by chance? The only answer Francis Collins, the man who knows the genome revolution best, could give was "a sense of awe."⁹ It is remarkable that it was his science that transformed him from an atheist in his younger days into a practicing Christian at the prime of his scientific career. He comments: "I experience a sense of awe at the realization that humanity now knows something only God knew before. It is a deeply moving sensation that helps me appreciate the spiritual side of life."¹⁰ Collins is not the only scientist to have had this kind of experience. The well-known astronomer Allan Sandage too had a very similar experience through his work in contemporary astronomy. Speaking of his turn around from "almost a practicing atheist as a boy" to a believer at 50, he says: "It was my science that drove me to the conclusion that the world is much more complicated than can be explained by science. It is only through the supernatural that I can understand the mystery of existence."¹¹ There are many other similar cases. Decades ago both Albert Einstein and Werner Heisenberg had voiced similar sentiments. The recent developments in genetics, particularly in the genome research, seem not an attempt to dispense with God, but an invitation to know more and more about the Being who has made it all possible.

The genetic code is believed to be the essence of humankind and the key to the secrets of life. The time of this very basic understanding of the biological secrets of life is also the time for prayer and utmost humility. We may tirelessly strive towards that sense of judgment and balance which would direct us to the use of this new scientific power for the welfare of humanity and peace for earth. The scope for perverse use of genetic knowledge is as vast as its beneficial use. When Lord Rutherford had split the atom in the 30s of the last century, humanity was at the threshold of infinite physical power and energy to revolutionize the quality of human life. What was needed was the peaceful use of the Atom. The power took a sinister turn and today we have a stockpile of nuclear arsenal that can destroy the world ten times over. The devil descended upon us and we are still on a nuclear precipice. Genetic knowledge has similar potentialities. In wrong hands it can be directed to terribly mischievous use and to the utter brutalization of life. International protocols and fail-safe monitoring have to prevent this. It is good to have a giant's strength but it is tyrannical to use it like a giant.

Limitations and Possible Dangers of Genome Revolution

The genome is undoubtedly a most powerful source of knowledge that could be put into good or bad use. We know that the incredible nuclear power that was unleashed more than half a century ago has been used both to improve the quality of human life and to threaten the future of humans who discovered it.

While there is excitement all around the mapping of the human genome may also bring about some of the associated dangers. The enthusiasm over the implications and possibilities of the decipherment of the human genome has not blocked our awareness of the serious possible misuses of this knowledge and the need for the human community to engage in serious discussion about what are proper and improper uses of this new knowledge.

To start with, you may well be able to have your own report card printed out of your individual risks for future diseases based on the genes you have inherited. But this kind of information need not always be a boon to humans, especially when the person is helpless to deal with the problems diagnosed. Foreknowledge about the possibility of serious genetic diseases and even a premature death may become a source of tension and anxiety for the person. In situations like this ignorance may be a blessing in disguise. It may also be noted that all predictions made by medical sciences are only probabilistic, and so, in some cases, may not really happen. Having a list of possible problems awaiting to befall you some time in the future may not contribute to a pleasant and peaceful way of living.

Second, people talk a lot about the risk of privatizing the heritage of the human life. Prospective employers in future may like to look at the genetic map of an individual before hiring him/her for a particular job. At the same time, insurance companies will like to have access to the medical records before agreeing to insure a person. In other words, to say that the genome data will be used for the benefit of the humankind, still remains a distant dream.¹²

Third, there is the danger of reductionism. Explanation through reduction consists in reducing complex multiplicity to simple unity, to its simple components. Here analysis and explanation of a complex phenomenon is done by identifying the simplest components giving rise to it. For instance, the atomic theory explains material phenomena in

terms of the interaction between various atoms. The attempt of particle physics to fathom the depth of material reality has been a seemingly endless journey to deeper and deeper level of reduction. From molecules it moved to atoms, to protons, electrons, and neutrons, and finally to quarks. Today the research is on to go deeper than quarks.

An exactly similar reductionist approach is found in the biological sciences in their attempt to unravel the secret of life. It has moved from cell to nucleus, to DNA, to nucleotides. The genome revolution is reduction at its best in the biological sciences.

The process of reduction has been a most powerful tool in science to analyze and understand phenomena. However, it has certain inherent problems, particularly while dealing with living organisms. It involves fragmenting a complex reality, detaching it from the rest. It is assumed that the whole is simply the sum of the parts. Particularly in the case of living organisms, life does not seem to be the mere aggregate of its component parts.

Fourth, human experience and behaviour go beyond what can be captured by mere interaction between material particles, however, sophisticated. Behavioral patterns, while they may be genetically influenced in modest ways, are never going to be understood by fleshing out all the DNA sequence of the human genome, at least in large part. For instance, we will not understand important things like "love" by knowing the DNA sequence of the human.

It has been found that the actual genes and the bits of DNA controlling the on/off switch of genes protein-producing activity account for a mere 5% of total DNA in the cell. The remaining massive chunk of 95% is left out. This is a challenge to future scientific research.

Fifth, knowing how the components of the genes are arranged and how this arrangement affects certain life functions is not the same as knowing what life is. The specific structure of DNA and the sequencing of its components may be a necessary condition for life, but not sufficient to create life. The mystery of life still seems to elude science.

Sixth, an even more significant observation is that the genome refers only to the biological aspects of humans. It deals with human life purely from a biological point of view. But a human person is far more than a mere biological organism. The psychological, social, religious, and spiritual dimensions of the person too are significant. The genome

revolution leaves these aspects untouched, particularly how it affects these important aspects of our life as humans.

Seventh, genomics can obscure the reality of human freedom. Many proponents of behavioural genetics - the study of the role of genes in human behaviour - believe that human behaviour is determined by the genes. If this is so, then human freedom becomes illusory. In the context of genome revolution the situation is even more serious. If life and behaviour are decisively determined by the ordering of the base pairs in the genome, one has no choice but to follow the set pattern, and so one ceases to be free. If one is not free, moral responsibility will fade away. Criminals could always justify themselves on the plea that their genome structure made them commit the objectionable act. Such a situation would make human and social life impossible.

A satisfactory answer to this problem can come only when science knows definitely to what extent a person's actions are determined by his or her genomic sequence. This calls for further investigation into the function and operation of genes. Some studies so far show that at best only a small fraction of human behaviour is controlled by the genes. Furthermore, there is evidence to show that it is possible to override such genetic influences.

Eighth, the information from the genome of a person can be used for personal discrimination as well. Indiscriminate use of the genomic information can lead to unjust and easy categorization of persons into disadvantaged categories. For instance, the genome may show tendencies to certain sickness, and that person maybe banned by the insurance company or by the employing agency. Or it may show some tendency to antisocial activities, and one may be treated as an outlaw even before one commits any crime.

These forms of discrimination are based on the false premise that DNA can never change. However, Barbara McClintock of Cornell University has disproven these pundits of doom. According to her, DNA can undergo quite radical changes during the lifetime of an organism. For instance, sections of DNA can jump from one site to another in the genome, or more copies of a gene may be produced as a result of interactions with the environment.¹³

Lastly, the gap between the rich and the poor is likely to be widened. Whatever the benefits of genome, one thing seems to be certain: most of the benefits from it will be beyond the reach of ordinary persons, at

least in the near future. For most in the Third World countries, these developments may not go beyond curious newspaper reports. This would mean that the rich in a country will have almost exclusive right to better health, better looks, better educational and professional opportunities, longer life, etc. Only by enacting strong and stringent laws to make the benefits of the genome revolution available to all, and by being zealously scrupulous about enforcing them, can this threat of exploitation be countered.

To conclude, the opportunities of genetic research should not be overestimated. Certainly at the level of genetic medicine, i.e., diagnostic and genetic therapy, we can expect further advances in the coming decades. But a humanity freed from sickness and all pain still remains a utopia, and attempts to make it happen - long term or short - would lead to barbarism.

Reproductive medicine requires that we reconsider the basic understanding of human dignity. Biblically, human dignity is founded in the fact that humans are created in God's image: our ability and duty to be morally responsible. On the basis of morality, human existence is an end in itself (Kant). Even though we partially control others or allow them to control us, human dignity is incompatible with degrading people by making them means to serve ends that do not consider their welfare.

Foot Notes

- 1 Job Kozhamthadam, "The Cloning of Dolly: Some Reflections," *Vidyajyoti of Theological Reflection*, 62 (1998), pp. 116-118.
- 2 Aaron Hawley, "Cloning a Research Paper," pp. 29-30. 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 Nathan Myhrvold, "Human Clones: Why Not?" pp.20-23. 5 *Ibid.*
- 6 John Mahoney, *Seeking the Spirit*, p.248.
- 7 Job Kozhamthadam, "The Genome Revolution and the Science-Religion Dialogue" I, *Vidyajyothi Journal of Theological Reflection*, 65 (2001), pp. 85-97; Job Kozhamthadam, "The Genome Revolution and the Science-Religion Dialogue" II, *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection*, 65 (2001), pp. 193-204.
- 8 Sharon Begley, "Science Finds God", *Newsweek*, July 27, 1998, p.48.
- 9 See John Cornwell, "Scientists Playing God," *The Tablet*, July 8, 2000, p. 920
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 See Sharon Begley, "Science Finds God", *Newsweek*, July 27, 1998, p.47.
- 12 Devinder Sharma, "Understanding God's Language," *Mirror Today*, October 2000, pp. 53-54
- 13 See Aldridge, *The Thread of Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.72

Celebration of Old Age: Care of the Old People

Paulachan Kochappilly

The author has chosen a very timely topic for discussion. Old age is the last stage in the life of a person and last is the best. It is an age of maturity and wisdom. It is a stage of serenity and beauty. It is the colourful Sunset in the life of a person as beautiful as the Sunrise. It well deserves celebration of life in the context of the community with the whole-hearted acceptance of the old people by the whole community. Concern for the old includes not only provision of their needs, but especially love and care for their persons till the last moment of their lives.

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die (Eccl 3:1-2)

On Easter Sunday of the year 2000 my youngest maternal uncle breathed his last at the age of seventy six. In spite of his long-term illness, he had an active, eventful and joyful life. Though he was on medication for so many years, he never took leave from his family, social and parish life. He was hospitalised many times due to his illness. For the last time my uncle was taken to a hospital in the city during the Lent of 2000. As usual, he was given the best medical treatment available. His wife, children and relations were very caring and accompanying him closely and dearly. But on Palm Sunday, my uncle asked the hospital authorities to transfer him to his home. Accordingly, he was shifted. He looked better and relaxed. It was a homecoming. His children were intimated about his worsening health condition. All his children arrived. In the late afternoon of Easter Sunday 2000 my

uncle died in the loving presence of his dear and near ones; the climax and conclusion of the celebration of a lively and loving chapter of precious earthly life. It marked his Passover, from the earthly to the heavenly in the risen Lord.

Such stories are not uncommon in our community (Satyavati & Lancelot 1-15). However, I present this story in order to underscore the simple but profound truth the ordinary people of our faith community share and bear witness to: the beauty and destiny of life in the midst of harsh realities of suffering and death on the basis of one's faith.

John Paul II has this to say on the matter, "when death is clearly imminent and inevitable, one can in conscience refuse forms of treatment that would only secure a precarious and burdensome prolongation of life, so long as the normal care due to the sick person in similar cases is not interrupted. Certainly there is moral obligation to care for oneself and to allow oneself to be cared for, but this duty must take account of concrete circumstances. It needs to be determined whether the means of treatment available are objectively proportionate to the prospects for improvement. To forego extraordinary or disproportionate means is not the equivalent of suicide or euthanasia; it rather expresses acceptance of the human condition in the face of death" (EV 65).

A life lived in the company of persons makes life healthy, happy and holy. A person who responds to the call to live a life of relationship enters into unending celebration.

The advancement in medical science has considerably contributed to the promotion of health and prolongation of the life span. Thanks to the healing touch and health ministry of the Lord, made accessible to the sick and the aged by doctors and nurses in the field of medicine. There come a moment in life, when medicine is no more of great use and help. Certainly, scientific research should continue in alleviating human suffering and to improve the quality of life, always keeping in mind that our enterprises should result in respecting, protecting and promoting life. Our steps should be directed all the time everywhere and with everyone by the ethos of Christian identity as "the people of life and for life" (EV 6). The ethos of Christian community finds a coherent and integral illustration in the encyclical, "The Gospel of God's love for man, the Gospel of the dignity of the person and the Gospel of life are a single and indivisible Gospel" (EV 2).

This reflection on the celebration of old age and care of the old people will be made in seven successive statements.

1. **Life is a fundamental good. It is the basis for every human activity and, therefore, for morality as well. Hence, ethics, on the one hand, presupposes life, and on the other, supports and promotes it.**

Life is the basic human good, for every other good, as far as human beings are concerned, springs from and is directed towards life. In the absence of life, no other good can be thought about or worked out. Since life is the substratum of every good, human beings have an inherent inclination to have life and promote it. *Evangelium Vitae* focuses on this truth “Life in time, in fact, is the fundamental condition, the initial stage and an integral part of the entire unified process of human existence” (EV 2)

Ethics could be understood as the study of the way of life which supports and promotes the members of a community to attain their end. This emphasises the importance of life in the discussion of ethics. On the one hand, ethics presupposes life, and on the other, it supports and promotes the flourishing of life. The primary task of morality or ethics is, therefore, to preserve, promote and perfect life, within the framework of an integrated vision. In other words, ethics is to help people celebrate their life in the context of the community to which she or he belongs. Christian ethics, in this sense, is the study of the way of life revealed in Christ and supported by reason which is reflected in the celebration of the liturgy. Liturgy supports and promotes the members of the Christian community towards the transformation of their life in Christ through the Holy Spirit for the glory of God while engaged in establishing peace on earth and extending hope to human beings through concrete acts of charity. This description of ethics discloses, for certain, the centrality of life in the present discussion.

Everything gears up to the harmonious celebration of life. Old age is the last stage in the life of a person. It is an age of maturity and wisdom. It is a stage of serenity and beauty. It is the colourful Sunset in the life of a person, which is as abundantly beautiful as the Sunrise in the East. Old age is like the golden foliage of autumn. The Spring and Autumn have a beautiful look; rosy and golden in colour. Both, at dawn and at dusk, life is a great delight and yet delicate; it is passing and

never stands still. In life, there is agony and ecstasy; there is suffering and rejoicing; there is death and life. Definitely and inevitably, everything is part of the celebration of life. And celebration of life in the Lord and with the Lord is the path of the Christian pilgrimage.

The dignity of the human body. To make life celebrative, the human body is essential. The celebration of life takes place in and through the human body, certainly, animated by the indwelling Spirit. An orchestrated life presupposes the human body, for experience and expression of any kind heavily depend on healthy bodily life. Truly, life is treasured, tendered and triumphed in and through the human body. So the body is holy and honourable. The human is not a pure spirit imprisoned in the body or just united with the body, but is essentially an embodied spirit or an animated body. The eternal Word of God manifested himself to us in the flesh and redeemed us through the sacrifice of his bodily life. Jesus through his earthly bodily life manifested the worthiness and meaningfulness of human life: both physical and spiritual. Now our bodies are the ‘members of Christ’ (I Cor 6:15) and ‘temples of the Holy Spirit’ (v. 19). So we must ‘glorify God in our bodies’ (v. 20). Such an understanding invites us to live life with dignity and integrity involving the whole person.

The sanctity of human life: Life is much more than physiological processes. The Old Testament stresses the value of bodily life. A long life is regarded as a priceless blessing. Israel desires that it may be well with them, that Yahweh may give them life (Deut 6:24; Ps 34, 13). Since human beings are made in the ‘image and likeness’ of God (Gen 1:27) and since they breathe the “life-giving breath” of God (Gen 2:7), their life is holy. One has to be conscious of this Trinitarian connection all through life. In other words, one has to recognise, respect and respond to the indwelling presence of the Divine, in order to celebrate life in its fullness and holiness. This celebration finds a new summit, as and when a human is linked with the Divine. Such connection is natural, for the build-up of the human is open-ended. “So human life is not mere vital existence or merely physical and biological reality; it is an ethical and religious reality whose health and vigour ultimately depend upon integration of the human will with the divine will” (Lobo, 39).

According to the New Testament, life is given to us as a sacred trust. The fullness of life is eternal life. Bodily or earthly life is extremely

precious. While on earth, each one has a unique task to fulfil, which no one else can perform. Yet our bodily life is not a supreme or absolute good. It has a genuine value only if it is spent in the service of creation, human beings and God. The human must be ready to risk his / her life in the service of fellow beings.

2. Life is true, good and beautiful. Beauty presupposes life, to the extent it is experienced and expressed (lived and beheld).

Since God is the source of life, it shares in the attributes of God, in however small a proportion it may be. God is true, good and beautiful (*satyam sivam sundaram*). It is natural, therefore, for human beings, who are created in the image and likeness of God to be attracted by truth, goodness and beauty, which are a diffusion of the divine. Whatever is true, good and beautiful has an appeal to humans. This is an on-going search, and it continues until the person comes in contact with and contemplate on the source of all truth, goodness and beauty, that is, God. There is that restlessness in every person unless and until she or he is in union or communion with God. The truth, goodness and beauty of creation offers a glimpse of the eternal truth, goodness and beauty. So also there is an unquenchable thirst and hunger to be in union with the ultimate truth, goodness and beauty. St. Augustine articulates it in a marvellous and classical manner, “you made us for yourself and our hearts find no peace until they rest in you” (Confessions, I:1).

3 On the one hand, life expands in the context of celebration, and on the other hand, celebration supports and promotes life.

It is in the context of celebration that life emerges. For life celebration is a must. Coming together in unity is an essential feature of any celebration. And it is through coming closer and living together that life unfolds. This is true in the case of any living being; there is no life without celebration. It is explicit in the case of human beings. A new life emerges as the result of the celebration of the married partners. If the emergence of new life is a fruit of celebration, celebration, in turn, is a requirement for the support and promotion of life. Devoid of any distinction, celebration is a necessity for fostering and nurturing life. This is all the more true in the case of human beings, for they are to a greater extent dependent on others for their survival and interdependent

for their sustenance. For the people of old age, celebrations are of great significance. It is the company of their friends and relatives which gives old people incentive and encouragement to celebrate their life.

In other words, life and celebration find their expression in the context of relationship. And relationship serves as the key to celebration and life. Only in an environment of genuine and healthy relationship, celebration takes place and life is recognised and promoted. The bond of relationship is life-giving. This is of paramount importance in the case of old age and the care of old people.

4 Celebration makes life beautiful and meaningful. Ethics proposes the celebration of life and prescribes tips to make it more beautiful and meaningful.

As we have stated above, celebration is based on relationships. And relationship is life. It is through relationship one is able to attain wholeness and oneness. Relationship can be regained through reconciliation. Celebrations serve as occasions for reconciliation. In turn, genuine reconciliation leads to celebration. Celebrations feed ties and bonds, which assure life.

A gathering or assembly itself speaks of the bond that unites the members. It helps shape a community. In the weakness and frailty of any member especially in the case of old age, the community is the source of strength and support. A sense of community is of great solace to old people, especially, for those who feel an “empty nest” in the evening of their life. Belongingness to a community gives old people a great sense of security, serenity and integrity.

Behind every celebration there is a story which brings people together and which offers them an identity. The paschal mystery of Jesus Christ is pivotal to Christians and it is in the mystery of Christ that the faithful discover meaning and orientation in life.

The Liturgical celebrations impart to Christians a sense of identity and it is the paschal mystery that occupies the central stage of their life. Carrying their crosses, Christians, lovingly, freely and creatively follow the path of Jesus, a passage from passion, suffering and death to resurrection. Such a paschal dimension - passing over or crossing over from darkness to light, from selfishness to selflessness, from death to life - is decisive in the life of a Christian. It is a lifelong process, until

each and every Christian is totally transformed in Christ. As believers in Christ, the faithful will be able to proclaim with St. Paul, “it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20). The paschal mystery of Christ offers every Christian a wider horizon and deeper vision to situate the vicissitudes of life. This is all the more true as people become old, as they approach the dawn of their passover. The paschal mystery of Christ presents to all the faithful, in a special way to old people, a symbol to focus on and embrace wholeheartedly.

5 Jesus came to give us life, life in abundance. He, therefore, loved and served life. The parables of the Good Samaritan and the Good Shepherd are outstanding examples of his love and care for life.

Jesus is the way to the true life. He is the source of life. Jesus came to give us life, in its fullness and in abundance. Through his Incarnation, Jesus illustrated the fullness of human life. At the nativity of Jesus, the angels sang the hymn of holistic life, which consists in giving glory to God, establishing peace on earth and extending hope to human beings. Jesus through his words and works loved, served and saved life. His miracles, whether it be curing the sick, feeding the hungry, calming the sea, eating with the marginalised, teaching to pray for daily bread, etc., manifest the keen interest and decisive steps of Jesus to fill people with life.

In the parable of the Shepherd (Jn 10), Jesus plainly speaks, ‘I have come in order that you might have life - life in all its fullness’ (v. 10). A vivid picture of Jesus’ approach to life is available in the parable. Illustrating the characteristic features of a shepherd, Jesus draws the details of his own image, “I am the good shepherd, who is willing to die for the sheep” (v. 11). In the parable, Jesus portrayed the true image of one who serves and saves life, which found its full resonance in His own life, the culmination of which was manifested on the cross. The image of the good shepherd shows to us a few important aspects in caring old people: as the good shepherd knowing, loving and caring for the sheep, one has to know, love and care for the old people. These characteristics could be summarised into two: accompanying with love and administering for life. Once people know who the old people are and love them, there will be manifold ways of caring for them so that old people will be able to celebrate their life with the rest of the community.

Another candid picture of Jesus as the minister of life is available in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37). In this parable the Good Samaritan stands for Jesus, whose heart is filled with pity and who took the trouble to heal the wounded in order to save his life. Jesus paints a valid picture for all his followers to imitate him in the context of their life. Arthur Dyck draws fourfold guidelines in the care of the sick and aged from the Good Samaritan ideal. This ideal understands mercy as a pledge not to kill one's neighbour and, secondly, to be the kind of person who provides care for those who need it. The care is at least fourfold: 1) relief of pain, 2) relief of suffering (loneliness), 3) respect for the patient's right to refuse treatment, 4) provision of health care regardless of ability to pay (quoted from McCormick, 601).

6 Human life is a gift and has limits. Though cure of life is limited, care is unlimited. Withholding or withdrawing of a life-support system in modern hi-tech health care structure raises numerous moral questions.

Human life is understood to be a gift from God. The Old Testament looks upon a long life as a gift of God, a blessing often inherent in the right use of this earthly life. "Honour your father and your mother, that you may live long in the land" (Ex 20:1 2). "Life is a most precious gift from God. It is not ours to do with it as we like, but rather something we hold in trust" (Lobo, 59). Therefore, the prohibition, 'Thou shall not kill' (Ex 20:13). In the light of the commandment "Man's bodily life is entrusted to his freedom as its most precious talent. He is not the independent lord of his life but only a steward subject to the sovereignty of God" (Häring, 69). Thus, we have to do all that is possible and reasonable to the flowering of life, discerning the divine will and deciding in the light of the dialogue with God.

As the custodians of the precious gift of life, we have the duty to preserve and promote it. Questions of preserving, sustaining and comforting life are crucial in the discussion of morality. This question assumes enormous importance as the discussion turns to the old age and care of the old people. What is to be done? What should not be done? How should one go about doing it? Who is to decide? Who is responsible? What is the limit, if there is any? How should one go about doing it? Is there any universal norm to be followed in the service of life? Questions are numerous in this area of care and service of life.

In spite of the unbelievable advancements in the field of science, especially, in the field of medical science, one has to admit with all humility that life has limits. Old age is one of the different phases of life. And there is no magic formula for eternal youth. Medical science is “working toward making old age more active and enjoyable” (Reader’s Digest, 252). Gerontology (the study of aging) tries to establish the factors behind the normal process of aging and to distinguish between the effects of age and those caused by lifestyle or disease. But the science of gerontology “cannot remove the fact of aging” (ibid.). There is no easy escape from the fact of old age and death, one has to confront it, whether one likes it or not.

Suffering and death are riddles in human life; it is a mystery. There is no easy solution to them. The reasonable response to such problems is to embrace them as mystery and live with them. “Life, as precious as it is, must ultimately end. The example of Scripture is to accept death rather than exhaust all resources trying to resist it. Such a perspective has important implications for medical decision-making near the end of life” (Dunlop, 39). In spite of the technological advancements, death is inevitable. There is no point in being reluctant to face the truth of death. Moreover, death waits for none.

In supporting and promoting life, medical science has made commendable effort. It has done all it can to extend the human lifespan by banishing epidemic diseases, such as smallpox, tuberculosis, etc. It is doing its best in combating cancer and aids, which threaten humanity. We should be grateful to the efforts of committed medical scientists for their valuable contribution in the field of healthcare. And the effort should continue in order to contain pain and suffering in connection with disease and old age. “In unremitting pursuit of human wellbeing in the face of disease, disaster and dissolution, medicine is committed to life rather than death, to vital function rather than dysfunction and, when all else fails, to comfort rather than discomfort. This profession of medicine is, in human terms, a most honourable one” (Mahoney, 36).

An ethical issue in connection with old age and prolonged illness is the question of euthanasia. The encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* defines euthanasia in the following words, “Euthanasia in the strict sense is understood to be an action or omission which of itself and by intention causes death, with the purpose of eliminating all suffering” (EV 65).

“Direct killing, by whatever name it is called, clearly transgresses the right which one has over the life of oneself or of another” (Lobo, 61). The author further argues against euthanasia saying, “It would be objectively a negation of the creaturely character of our human condition and hence contradict genuine human freedom” (Lobo, 61). Citing the views of Vaux, McCormick presents the impending danger involved in accepting euthanasia, “there will be a corrosion of the unique value of the individual; the physician is likely to become in increasing measure a technician and a tool of public policy; we will erode our responsibilities as a society to deal constructively with health problems” (McCormick, 594). What is important is articulated in the following statement, “what we owe the sick is not help to die (Hilfe zum Sterben) but help in dying (Hilfe im Sterben)” (quoted in McCormick, 599).

7 It is of paramount importance to perceive life as a fundamental but not absolute good. Suffering, old age and death are different faces of human life. Confronted with such hard realities of life, a community that accompanies gives health and strength to the sick and the old. Death marks the passage to new life. God is the source and focus of our life.

Life is a fundamental good, but not absolute good. This is the kernel of the Christian understanding of life. In other words, God is the supreme good. Therefore, nothing should stand in the way to the attainment of God, the absolute good, from whom every goodness emerges and towards whom everything flows forward and upward.

This understanding of life presents an appropriate approach to the care of the sick and old people. It should shape the celebrating of old age and care of the old. Life is a gift. It is a talent. It is to be handled with proper care. It is to be protected and promoted by all reasonable means. Hence the Christian view paints a realistic picture on life and tries to put everything in proper order.

Jesus who surrendered his own life on the cross for the sake of humanity is a marvellous model before the faithful, to pattern their own life. In the case of Jesus the will of God reigns supreme; God is the supreme good and priority in life. Therefore, he discovers the significance of suffering and death on the cross in order to enter into the glory of God. The cross of Christ is the sign of salvation. As one

focuses on the symbol of the cross, one regains hope to bear with one's own suffering and live old age in view of participating in the divine life. Thus the cross of Christ shines as the lighthouse for all those who are on the sea of life and all those who embraced it willingly and courageously share in the same destiny of Jesus. In this way, the mystery of the cross unleashes energy and enthusiasm to make one's own passage from suffering, old age and death to eternal life. Thus the paschal mystery becomes the pivotal point for all Christians, especially in old age, when people experience all kinds of isolation, alienation and abandonment. When old people locate their life in the mystery of Christ, they regain and retain oneness, relatedness and abundance in the place of isolation, alienation and abandonment. This is the key to celebrate old age: to contemplate the mystery of the cross and to be in communion with God, in whom everyone finds permanent celebration. Besides, in God there is perfect company and fellowship, in communion of persons.

In caring for the old people, the community is a great support. This is what the family members and Christian community can and should extend to the aged. A living company of people can provide the need for friendship and relationship, which everyone lovingly looks forward to. Old people cannot move out and meet others and make friendship with others as and when they desire so. Taking this aspect of old age into account the family members and the faith community can offer the old people much needed company. Most old age people would prefer to stay at home and in the environment in which they grew up. There they are familiar with their surroundings. New environments are always challenges. Therefore, even when good medical facilities are minimum, old people long to return home. This is what I see among terminally sick people and their insistence to go home, though it does not offer all medical facilities. This is what my uncle asked for. He breathed his last in the company of his wife and dear and near ones.

The sacrament of the anointing of the sick is another occasion where the faithful gather together to pray with and for the sick, whereby healing or peaceful acceptance takes place. The ceremony reiterates the importance of touch and company which can comfort the sick and strengthen the aged, if not heal them for good. In fact it is a gift from God, "to accept the meaning of one's suffering or death are unique gifts of God which proclaim the mystery of death and resurrection and reveal its power for those who open themselves in faith" (Haring, 127).

In conclusion, old age is a gift of God; it is like a golden valley with the colourful foliage of autumn. Everybody needs to be prepared to confront the final stage of the passage. It is to be celebrated within the context of the community. The vigour and vitality of the community can be measured on its ability to minister to the sick and aged. The community has to organize occasions for old people to assemble and engage in activities as far as it is possible and viable. Such occasions will boost the morale of the community to live life in its fullness and with thankfulness. It is through the accomplishment of God-given tasks or assignments that we may wish to live long. This entails two things: one, to celebrate one's own life desiring to live long in fulfilling the will of God; two, to assist people celebrate their life through ministry and company. The Christian ministry to old people should be inspired by the supreme example of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples and the Christian company to the aged should be marked by the example of the Good Samaritan and the Good Shepherd. Curing has limits but not caring Jesus who came to care for the weak, sick, voiceless, poor, sinful and marginalized should be our ideal and model in caring for the old people. Jesus who accepted the chalice in the moment of agony and surrendered himself in the hands of the Father should be the guiding force to carry the cross of old age with integrity towards the glory and beauty it promises.

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Bulletin

Catholic Bishop's Conference of India (C.B.C.I.)

A reflection by an Archbishop

Introduction

To reminisce is the privilege of an old man and it is this luxury one loves to indulge in, in one's retirement.

My associations with the CBCI date back to my earliest days as a bishop. Even as I sit here and pen these few lines my mind flits back down the corridor of the years and memories of the past thick as hail come back with all their warmth and freshness. I always love to recall my early days as a bishop and member of the CBCI. It was in the early '50s: the CBCI was then in its infancy. The family too was small, so small that our early sessions would take place in the Seminary of the Redemptorists in Bangalore. Good Fr. Hickey, the then Provincial, used to play host to us and in the process literally went to town with his lavish hospitality. But the most heart-warming feature of those memorable days was what Paul in another context describes beautifully: "We, though many, are one body!" This is how all of us felt and it is hardly surprising that every meeting of ours was an enriching experience in more ways than one. There's one thing that strikes me here. The early days of the CBCI were certainly very tumultuous, yet on all scores the most fruitful. Name any problem and the CBCI was there on the ball and has left its impress.

There is one incident here that stands out very prominently in my memory. The country was just drinking the euphoria of our new-born Independence, when there burst on us in Nagpur, the then capital of M.P., the fury of a terrific storm. This was in the early fifties in the wake of the infamous NIYOGI COMMITTEE. Our missionaries in the field were under fire. It didn't take long for the CBCI to swing into action. In this connection I love to recall a meeting that the three of us, Cardinal Gracias, Archbishop Joe Fernandes (then Archbishop of Delhi) and I, had with Pandit Nehru, then Prime Minister, in his office in South Block. This meeting proved extremely cordial. We came away very happy. Pandit Nehru kept to his word. The atmosphere cleared almost immediately. Our foreign missionaries particularly, who were then under a cloud, continued their work peacefully in the field. Instances like these could be multiplied. From its earliest days the CBCI had proved its mettle: it had made its mark.

Early Beginnings

It's here I recall some significant observations from the pen of none other than His Eminence, the late Cardinal Gracias, the leader of the gallant band of Founding Fathers of the CBCI.

"How grateful Catholic India ought to be to the metropolitans, who had assembled at Madras in September 1944, to install a permanent association of the Catholic Hierarchy of India and draw up its Statutes".

He then goes on to give some more interesting details: "What's significant is that at the first session of the Vatican Council several hierarchies from Europe and America asked for the statutes of our CBCI.

"Not many Episcopal Conferences had been publishing Annual Reports as we have been doing."

"Few have a Centre as the one we have in the capital."

"The fact that the Government of India recognizes 'de facto' the CBCI as the official organ and mouthpiece of the Hierarchy clearly shows that it certainly has a status in the country."

It's on this beautiful note he concludes his autobiography: "TO REVIVE OLD MEMORIES"; "We do not claim to have achieved wonders, though we could certainly count our blessings. The CBCI has been the instrument of the unification of the hierarchies, in spite of the diversities of language, conditions, rites etc."

We have here as it were the "magna carta" of the CBCI enshrining the "raison d'etre" of this wonderful institution, as also the parameters of its record of service down die years. Having spent two decades and more of my early and impressionable years as a bishop in close association with the Cardinal, I can vouch for the depth of his sentiments in this regard. For him the CBCI was his life-blood. Having traveled extensively he had a breadth of vision second to none. Like good Pope John XXIII, the "world for him was his parish".

Two things stand out here and hit us in the eye as it were. The CBCI has certainly stood the test of time. What's remarkable is that it has seen the light of the day far in advance of many advanced countries and hierarchies round the world. What Cardinal Gracias refers to about many other conferences asking for our Statutes is very significant and true. I have been a personal witness to the reputation our Conference enjoyed especially during the hectic days of the Vatican Council. The CBCI has truly succeeded in making a mark for itself both inside and outside our country.

Recent Events

What is it then that could have happened for things to change so drastically, I was going to say, dramatically? Discussions have been going on for quite some time now. Yet even though these deliberations were heated, things were still under wraps and behind the curtain as it were. It was only recently that the matter came out into the open: and this too because of a chance incident. A personal letter addressed by the late Archbishop Alan to the Holy See seeking its intervention and pleading in almost so many words: "SAVE THE CBCI"!

The question is long and involved: yet I shall try to delineate the matter very succinctly. In view of certain changes in the Codes of Canon Law of both the Oriental Churches as well as the Latin Church, there has been need for a revision and updating of various structures, among them the Episcopal Synods and Conferences. As a result the two hierarchies of the Oriental Rites, namely the Syro-Malabar and the Syro-Malankara Churches, now have their Synod and Conference respectively while the body of the Latin Bishops have banded themselves together under a new Conference, known as the CCBI, or Conference of

Catholic Bishops of India (Latin Rite) according to the Latin Code and Pope's Letter of 1987. The point at issue therefore now is, what are we to do with the erstwhile CBCI? Has the age-old Conference become redundant? (In other words, both the CBCI as a structure as well as a (much revered) name might fittingly be consigned to history?) This is the word that's doing its rounds in some quarters in the upper echelons of the Church in India. It's against this backdrop that the late Archbishop Alan's letter would want to be viewed.

In a way it's unfortunate that ink on Archbishop Alan's letter had hardly dried, when he was called to his reward. If one reads Archbishop Alan's letter even cursorily, one can't miss the depth of his feeling and the earnestness of his plea. All this is hardly surprising if one bears in mind Archbishop Alan's close association with the CBCI over the years.

In this context one can also glean what would have been the reactions of Cardinal Gracias in this regard. What's remarkable is that on all scores Cardinal Gracias stands out among his peers as an intellectual giant. Yet what distinguished him from the rest, more than anything else is his love for Holy Mother the Church coupled with a deep sense of loyalty to the Holy See. Having lived with the Cardinal, very closely at that, during those stormy and tumultuous days, I feel I can vouch for what the Cardinal never tired of stressing, namely the need we Bishops as Pastors of the Church have of being steeped in Irenaeus' "SENSUS ECCLESIAE".

If there was anyone who was well versed in his Canon Law, it was the Cardinal. Yet this legal perspective always took a back seat to his deep SENSUS ECCLESIAE. Fortunately (or unfortunately) he wasn't around when Pope John Paul II came out with his directive "of retaining the CBCI", adding by way of explanation "to be able to deal effectively in all "supra-national affairs and supra ritual matters. History would have been different. Deeply devoted to the Holy See and loyal as he was to the Church, this alone would have sufficed for the Cardinal to make up his mind at a critical juncture like this. I feel sure that he'd have struggled somehow to find ways and means of making the Holy-Father's letter the starting point of all endeavours in this connection.

The Hub of the Problem

If one reads the fine print between the lines of Archbishop Alan's letter, there's one thing one can't miss: It's a tinge of anxiety and I was going to say, deep disappointment. This is what worries me too. Have our bishops perchance reached the end of their tether and in the process could it be that they feel they have reached the end of the road? The two Oriental Churches, of the Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara rites have got their Episcopal Synod and conferences we in the latin church have our own Conference, the CCBI, the conference of the Catholic Bishops of India (Latin Rite). We've all got what we wanted, one Episcopal body and conference on our own. Isn't this what we have been striving for all these months (years, I should say)? But have we stopped to consider at what cost? All said and done, isn't this a pretty truncated, or rather, decapitated, CBCI? It is certainly a far cry from the vision Pope John Paul II has had for the CBCI, a caricature of that beautiful picture he has painted

for us in his letter to the bishops of India. For our Founding Fathers, it is just "shattered dreams", if you ask me. They would turn in their graves at even the distantest inkling of the glib statements making their rounds these days regarding the future of this august body, which they have nurtured and helped build up with so much love and care.

There's one thing here that bothers me. I've often asked myself, whether we in the Latin hierarchy haven't been a little too precipitate, whether in fact we haven't jumped the gun by rushing through our fresh Memorandum of Association for our newly Registered Society, to follow it up with an up-date of canonical provisions to meet the changed legal requirements?

Somewhere in Cardinal Gracias' memoirs, there's this little note, which is very significant. He was quite excited at the fact that several enquiries had come from various hierarchies regarding the statutes of our CBCI. In this connection he makes this pointed observation: "Obviously in the aftermath of the Council, these statutes would have to be revised". Note the words: "...these Statutes", implying that the original structure remains the same. With his keen knowledge of Canon Law and his broad perspective could he have foreseen the present eventuality?

After all, let's not forget the Orientals have their own Canon Law. If anything, their Oriental Synods (of Bishops) have much more power and canonical weight than ours, and given the necessary (canonical) adjustments they would have acquiesced and accepted the CBCI along the lines envisaged in Pope John Paul's letter to the bishops of India.

I say all this with an added purpose. Had this scheme of things taken place, among other things wouldn't have obviated the futile duplication of facilities? Apart from the duplication of physical structures - the huge, massive buildings that have come up almost side by side and that too in the same city, - isn't there a sort of mindless multiplication of Commissions, which could lead to a lot of avoidable tension and bickering. This apparently has been happening - and it's inevitable because after all it is the same people that we are working with. "Ad quid perditio haec"? - 'why all this waste'? is a cry that we have been hearing. And we cannot blame our people if they innocently stare and ask. In built in the present drift is a lot of avoidable tension and the loss of a spirit of good will and amity, which more than ever is the urgent need of the day.

A Divided House

Whether we like to believe it or not, we are a divided house. Some years ago I remember this message I got from one of my brother bishops through one of his priests: "Go tell that Eugne that he is playing with fire: 'They' will let him down". It was said in jest, but it hurt, not because the "M.P. bishops' Experiment" (which he was here referring to) had failed. Far from it. Having taken all the necessary precautions and all the advice from our brother bishops of our Hindi speaking regions as well as the two Dicasteries in Rome, we had launched out. By now six to eight Eparchies had been erected and the last two or three decades have seen the establishment of a large net work of educational, medical and welfare institutions and that too in some of the deep recesses of the

country, in areas often remote and inaccessible. "Their span has gone out into the farthest corners of the earth", are the heartwarming words of the eucharistic liturgy, which keep ringing in our ears. Why not count our blessings, as Cardinal Gracias used to say.

What worries and, hurts me is something else. The "we" - "they", syndrome, that is so deeply ingrained in the hearts of many of us even today. At a time when all hands would want to be on the deck, don't forget our people look up to us, their Pastors, for support and guidance. The words of St. Augustine come to my mind: he was speaking to his people: "For you I am a bishop, but with you I am a Christian. The first is an office accepted, the second a grace received. If then, I am gladder by far to be redeemed with you than I am to be placed over you. I shall, as the Lord commanded, be more completely your servant".

Light at the end of the Tunnel

All is not lost however. There's still a light at the end of the tunnel, however faint the flicker may be.

From snippets of information I've been able to glean, there's this I understand: that the two Dicasteries in Rome have through their representatives Cardinal Tomko and Archbishop Zago conveyed this message to us (in the CCBI) to hold on to our plans for the final reprint of our revised statutes. Well, till things are finally sorted out! I'm wondering whether all this isn't providential. Isn't there the possibility, however slim, of setting the clock back? To my mind Rome is expecting just this. The Holy See, I feel, would want all of us to continue talking across the table and come out with a definitive proposal with some re-thinking if necessary, against the backdrop of the Holy Father's letter to us, to ensure that the CBCI is still there in name and structure, to continue the good work our Founding Fathers envisaged for it in the Church and the country, which today is passing through a crisis. The Holy Father, I have reason to believe, will be pleased if we did so. Only then would Rome step in and put its stamp of approval. Let us be generous and God will help us.

Conclusion

On all scores, as everyone can see, we are passing through difficult days. Everywhere around there is so much tension, conflict and division. Added to this confusion the Church is under fire and is being attacked on all sides as never before. Our challenge in the circumstances is all the greater, not only "to be ONE", but at the same time like the Master to be a CATALYST, building bridges of love and hope and peace wherever we go.

As one of our modern historians sums it up very succinctly: "Two things about the Christian religion must surely be clear to anybody with his eyes in his head: ONE is that we cannot do without it. The other is that they cannot do with it as it is."

Archbishop Eugene D'Souza (Retd.)

Bhopal

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